

3-25-2017

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Jeannie Pridmore

University of West Georgia, jpridmor@westga.edu

Samantha White

University of West Georgia, sdwhite@westga.edu

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Recommended Citation

Pridmore, Jeannie and White, Samantha, "Integrating Technology into a Management of Human Resources Course" (2017). *SAIS 2017 Proceedings*. 22.

<http://aisel.aisnet.org/sais2017/22>

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INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO A MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES COURSE

Jeannie Pridmore

University of West Georgia

jpridmor@westga.edu

Samantha White

University of West Georgia

sdwhite@westga.edu

ABSTRACT

Information Systems has turned the Human Resource field into a sophisticated talent tracking and data-mining arena. Mastering Human Resources Information Systems has been reported as a top in demand skill for human resource employees. Universities are increasingly incorporating real-life Information Systems into their programs to produce graduates that meet industry demands. Using hands-on HRIS exercises is one initiative that could enhance student learning and produce graduates with a leg up in industry. How can faculty members integrate HRIS hands-on exercises to ensure students have the opportunity to develop this knowledge and skill set? This paper investigates using hands-on HRIS exercises in a Human Resource Management course to enhance student learning and skills development. Data will be collected using a pre and post survey designed to measure perceived student learning, skill development, and actual student learning. Then t-tests will be utilized to determine if differences exist after exposure to the course material and the hands-on exercises.

Keywords

Human Resource Management, Human Resource Information Systems, SAP, Active Learning

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 20 years, Information Systems (IS) have had a major impact on organizational effectiveness and overall performance. Today cloud-based enterprise-wide systems are used to integrate and support an organization's business processes and transactions including marketing, accounting, production, and human resource management (Johnson et al., 2016). The Human Resource Management function are using these IS on a widespread basis. Recent studies show that the majority of all large organizations have implemented Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) to support core functions, processes, and decisions (CedarCrestone, 2014). This has created is a demand for employees who have experience and knowledge with HRIS.

This demand creates new challenges for business schools to provide students with HRIS experience and to produce graduates who possess HRIS skills and process knowledge. Advances in pedagogical approaches place emphasis on active learning or learning by doing (Pridmore et al., 2010; Mykytyn et al., 2008). Given that most business majors who are interested in working in HR would take an HR Management course, we suggest that a hands-on HRIS exercise integrated into an HR Management course could be an effective way to ensure HR business process knowledge and HRIS skill creation.

SAP Success Factors is the based HRIS that will be implemented in the HR Management course. SAP Success Factors is a cloud-based integrated talent management system that tracks recruiting, employee performance, learning, and compensation. SAP SuccessFactors is a leader in the HRIS industry. This paper studies the effectiveness of using a hands-on HRIS exercise to improve student HR knowledge and HRIS skill creation. First we will present a review of the literature and hypotheses. Next, we discuss the methods and experiments to be used. We will end with a discussion of opportunities for future research and conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

HR Management (HRM) is known to be cumbersome and labor intensive. Organizations are starting to document how they are creating business value through workforce management, and researchers now realize the strategic importance of HRM (Mane, 2016). HRIS is a combination of HR and IS. It is rooted in the field of IS and is defined as the following:

a system used to acquire, store, analyze, retrieve, and distribute information regarding an organization's human resources. An HRIS is not simply computer hardware and associated HR-related software. Although an HRIS includes hardware and software, it also includes people, forms, policies and procedures, and data (Kavanagh et al., 1990 p. 29)

HRIS has become a strategically important organizational system through which job applicants and employees communicate with organizations, develop relationships, and receive key HR Management services (Johnson et al., 2016). HRIS is becoming

increasingly important as it allows for stream lining placement, increase an organization's ability to attract and retain talented employees, and allows for data mining due to the amount of information it can hold in one database. The strategic value of HRIS does not seem to be dependent on the size of the organization. Small and large organizations reap both reap great benefits from HRIS (Saraswat, et al., 2015).

Organizations of all sizes are implementing HRIS to gain strategic benefits. Organizations aim to implement HRIS solutions to integrate personnel departments and to optimize HR throughout their organization (Stroheier, 2013). This has lead to knowledge of HRIS and skills working in HRIS as being listed as top in demand talents for HR employees. Business schools have the opportunity to integrate HRIS into their curriculum as a way to make their courses more relevant and to produce students who are more marketable.

In addition, pedagogical approaches that are based solely on lectures have been criticized as passive student learning (Bok, 1986). Active learning has gained prominence among educators and researchers. It is argued that students seek opportunities where they can simulate realistic situations and apply their knowledge (Auster and Wylie, 2006). In response to this movement, SAP, Oracle, Microsoft, and other ERP providers have developed and offered academic material for higher education integration. More than 400 universities around the world have integrated SAP ERP systems into their programs in some way (Pridmore et al., 2015; Cronan & Douglas, 2012), and previous studies have shown that students find value exposure to an industry ERP system such as SAP (Seethamraju, 2011). However, we could not find any pedagogical case studies that used SAP's SuccessFactors exercises or hands-on HRIS specifically.

This study will focus on how to implement a hands-on HRIS exercising into a HRM course in a way to improve three constructs, HRIS Knowledge, HR Business Process Knowledge, and HR IS Transaction Skills. HRIS Knowledge is defined as understanding the impact of integrated HR information and systems in a business. HR Process Knowledge is defined as knowledge of how HR master data is organizations, planned, and integrated for talent management. HRIS Skills is defined as the student's perception of how confident they are in becoming proficient in an HRIS.

We posit that implementing an SAP's SuccessFactors hands-on exercise will positively impact HRIS Knowledge, HR Process Knowledge, and HRIS Skills. We put forth the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: HRIS Knowledge will improve as a result of completing a hands-on Success Factors exercise.

Hypothesis 2: HR Business Process Knowledge will improve as a result of completing a hands-on Success Factors exercises.

Hypothesis 3: HRIS Transaction Skills will improve as a result of completing the Success Factors exercise.

RESEARCH METHODS AND MEASURES

This research will utilize pre and post surveys to examine the perceived student learning from completing a hands-on SAP SuccessFactors exercise. The instrument items used in this study were developed based on previous SAP curriculum research (Pridmore et al., 2015; Seethamraju, 2011; 2007; Cronan & Douglas, 2012). The items were reviewed for content as well as readability, and modified accordingly. Eleven items were developed to assess the above hypotheses. The survey will also consist of demographic questions (gender, class year, and major). Each question will use a seven-point likert scale with 4 being neither/nor, 1 being the most negative response, and 7 being the most positive response. The questions are displayed in Table 1.

Instrument Item
How would you rate your ability to understand the impact of integrated HR information in a business' decision making?
How would you rate your understanding of the impact an individual HR employee has on the operation in other functional areas?
How would you rate your understanding of the role and complexity of technology in HR?
How would you rate your knowledge of business terminology in HR such as organizational structure, personnel master data, organizational planning, recording qualifications, integrate event management, talent management, performance management, etc.?
How would you rate your knowledge of the business processes included in HR?
How would you rate your knowledge of the interrelationships and inter-dependencies of various business functions such as HR, accounting, marketing, productions, etc.?
What is your confidence level that you will be able to complete a transaction in a HRIS?
What is your confidence level that you will be able to become skilled at using a HRIS?
What is your confidence level that you will be able to easily learn how to operate in a HRIS?
SuccessFactors was a worthwhile learning experience: disagree/agree
I learned about HRIS from the SuccessFactors exercise: disagree/agree

Table 1: Perceived Student Learning Instrument Items

DATA COLLECTION

The surveys will be administered to students who are enrolled in the Human Resource Management course at a medium sized public university. The course included lectures on HCM and HRIS concepts, and one hands-on SAP SuccessFactors exercise. The hands-on exercise leads the students step-by-step through completing HCM business processes in a fictitious company using SAP's SuccessFactors. The course will be administered using the following schedule.

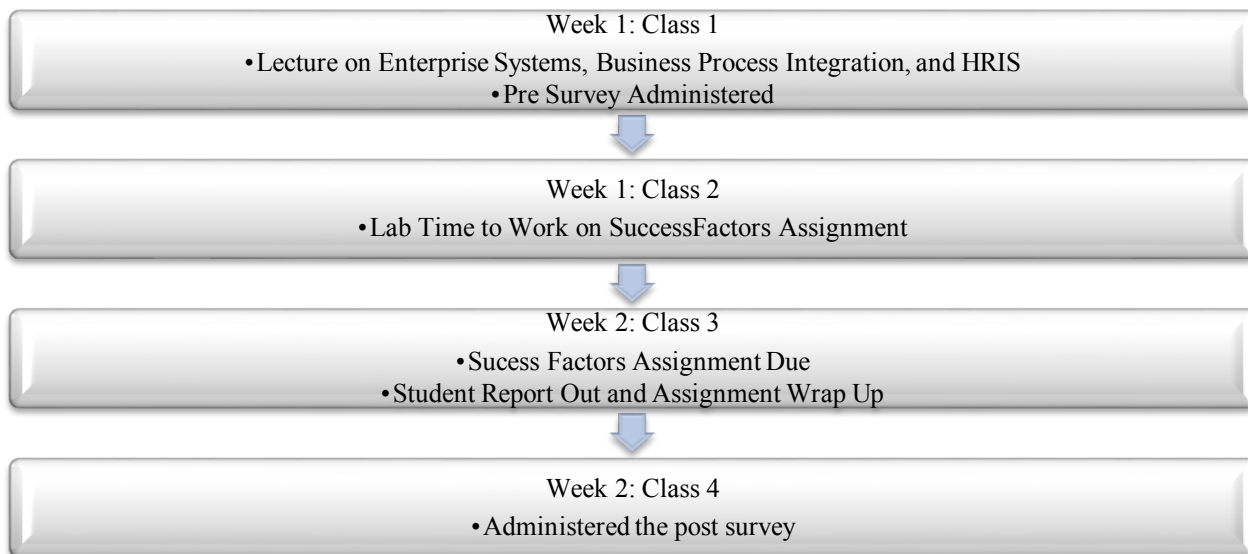


Figure 1: Schedule and Structure of the Hands-On SAP SuccessFactor Exercise

The pre-survey will be administered after the instructor lectures on HRIS and HR concepts, but before SAP SuccessFactors is introduced to the students. The post survey will be administered after the completion of the SAP SuccessFactors exercise. The

surveys were not required and did not negatively impact their grades. Figure 1 displays the schedule that will be used for the lectures, the survey, and the SAP SuccessFactors hands-on exercise.

DATA ANALYSIS

T-tests will be utilized to determine if there are differences between the pre and post surveys. The demographic variables will be analyzed using a MANOVA. 2-sample t-tests will be used to evaluate if significant differences exist between the pre and post surveys.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study seeks to understand what if any benefits exist from incorporating a hands-on SAP SuccessFactors exercise in a Human Resource Management course. Hands-on experiential learning gets students actively involved the learning process. By completing hands-on activities in HRIS, students could not only develop HRIS skills but also better understand HRIS and HCM business process integration.

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