Faculty's Awareness and Challenges of E-learning in TAIF University

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Abstract: In this paper, we present a review on the E-Learning process in AL-TAIF University, KSA. We discuss the current status at the college including infrastructure and faculty members and provide an overview about eLearning challenges AL-TAIF University faced. The results indicated that there exist challenges in exercising e-learning at the College for teaching and learning.

Keywords: E-Learning, Challenges, Higher Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has become real in the current century, and it is generally agreed that advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) provides opportunities for competitive advantage in various sectors, such as e-economy, e-business and e-education.

The educational sector is one which allows for adjustment to the strategy for providing better services to learners. Information Technology (IT) in education helps to provide modern, efficient, effective and cost-effective alternatives to teaching and learning, called e-Learning.

Stockley (2003) defines e-Learning as the delivery of learning, training or educational programs via electronic means. Nowadays e-Learning is considered as one of the most important learning models in education, business, and the public sector (Cho, Park, Jun Jo, Wook Jeung, & Lim, 2009).

The Sloan Consortium’s Annual Report (Allen & Seaman, 2007) showed the recent state of online learning in United States higher education. There were approximately 3.5 million students enrolled in at least one online course in the fall of 2006. That represents a 10% increase in the number of the students taking online classes over the number reported in the previous year. This increase encourages universities and colleges to offer online courses and programs (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Another study, which gathered data on the number of employees working around the world, reported that e-Learning helped those employees to learn while working and to improve their preferences (Masie, 2008).

Overall, e-Learning was ranked as the second most frequently used learning tool in the workplace (Cho et al., 2009).

Taif University is one of the modern Saudi Universities King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz ordered to establish. The University established in 2006 with numerous colleges. One of these colleges is the College of Management that has an initiative to apply eLearning mode. The College of Management has four Computers laboratories. These laboratories have defiantly led to improved teaching and learning processes, to some extent. The laboratories equipped with the essential software and hardware, such as computers, printers, scanners, and Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access; however, there is no internet connection that is to be considered as a core of the eLearning. Hence, In this paper, the researchers will extend their research to identify the infrastructure challenges Taif university face, as well as challenges faculty face regard eLearning.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research project is to explore and provide an overview about eLearning challenges AL Taif University faced. These challenges have been criticized to two different type that are: 1- Faculty members Challenges 2- Infrastructure Challenges.

A. Research Questions

- What are some of the challenges faced by the faculty at Al Taif University in using eLearning services?
- What are some of the infrastructure challenges faced by Al Taif University in using eLearning services?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last decade researchers had found that there are negative attitudes toward online education models along with the positive attitudes. These negative attitudes are found in education institutions among faculty, students, and parties involved in online education. Hence, education institutions should consider the negative attitudes, and aim to address them in advance. Otherwise
online education may not be as effective as it could be. Gammill and Newman (2005) found that a majority of faculty were not using Web Based Instruction (WBI), and that a low level of WBI implementation was associated with:

- The nature of course content, which means not all classes are good for the online model.
- Lack of institutional support.
- Lack of enough release time for online course development and revisions.
- Unreliable technology.
- Lack of incentives for teaching online.

Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that if the education institutions implement policies, road maps, and support, the future will be brighter for WBI.

(Carrol-Barefield, Smith, Prine, & Campbell, 2005; Hislop and Atwood, 2000) found that faculty had negative attitudes toward online education since it requires more time and effort to develop a course and teach it than traditional courses. In light of this finding it is important that adequate institutional support for the design and development of online courses is provided to ensure successful adoption of online education.

Boggs and Pirani (2003) cite a number of e-Learning challenges faculty very often face:

- Lack of knowledge to design courses with technology.
- Lack of confidence to use technology in teaching.
- Lack of technology knowledge.
- Inconsistent platform, tools, and software.
- Maintaining passion to learn technology.
- Network and software crashes during classes.

After analyzing those challenges, the researchers found that the most significant challenges education institutions are the faculty lack of knowledge to design courses with technology and lack of confidence to use technology in teaching. Figure(1) shows this analysis.

IV. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, The sample size of the study is 20 lecturers. The survey is performed on random sampling, all of them are male. The lecturers were from different departments. The lecturer participants provided quantitative data through a questionnaire.

![Figure (1): Significant Challenges](image)

The questionnaire were categorized into two parts. Part one was designed to measure the readiness of the faculty members and the college (infrastructure). In the second part, was designed to measure prevalence of technology and the percentage success of applied e-learning. The questionnaire were designed with five numerical values (1-5).

A. Results

The research questions deal with access internet, awareness, competence or expertise and challenges. The findings are presented in this order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you have a computer in your office?</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If, Yes do you access to the internet from your office?</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you have an Email?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Is a computer available in the classes?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Is a internet connected to the classes ?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do you use the computers for teaching your students?</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you know what is E-learning?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>do you use any e-learning software in your teaching</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1): the Part one questions for Faculty member's
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>V Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>V Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What is the level of readiness of the lecture halls for the application of e-learning?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What is your assessment of the strength of Internet in the university?</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2): the Part one questions for Faculty member's use a traditional method for teaching and learning.

**Computers and Internet**

There are many practical difficulties in implementing elearning programs in universities due to lack of resources (Mahmud and Gope, 2009). Computers and Internet connectivity are the most important requirements for e-learning. The study showed that more than half of the lecturers (67%) had a computer in their office; and only 58% can access internet from his office; but all of them had an Email; 42% use computers for classroom teaching (see Table 1). On the other hand, students can access to computers approximately two per week because of limited availability. Most of the faculty members (58%) use a traditional method for teaching and learning.

**Computer Expertise**

The survey revealed that (as shown in figure 2) most of stuff members had a very good expertise in using computers (67%) and the Internet (75%). In addition, 92% of stuff members considered that they had a good or above (very good) level of competency in using computers for teaching. In general, most of the lecturers believed they knew how to use computers and are quite familiar of utilizing all resources available on the web.

![Figure (2): Perceptions of Computer Expertise.](image)

**Challenges Faced by Stuff Members**

The lecturers’ responses were that there problems in applying e-learning represented in Lack of readiness of the lecture halls and Weakness of the Internet. As per our survey, the Internet connection is slow as 59% of the lecturers raised this issue, see table(2), and All lecturers have agreed on the lack of readiness of the lecture halls.

**Lack of awareness and interest**

Generally there is still a lack of awareness and interest among the faculty members. According to the survey, most of the respondents fall in the group of average knowledge in e-learning. Figure 3 shows the interest level about e-learning among respondents of the survey. The study showed that the opinion of the faculty members varied in the extent of successful implementation of e-learning in the university.

![Figure (3): Stuff members interest.](image)
Figure 4 show that, 33% of faculty members see that the successful implementation of e-learning, 66% believes that the probability of successful implementation of e-learning is weak.

Figure (4): assessment of the success rate of applying e-learning at the university

I. CONCLUSION

According to the study, The results indicated that there exist challenges in applying e-learning at the College for teaching and learning. It is necessary to take initiatives to overcome problems related to technological. There are many practical difficulties in implementing e-learning programs in university due to lack of resources such as The lack of computers in the classroom, slow strength of Internet and other resources at university. Improve the computer laboratories and halls lecture are one of the major important thing that must do in the university.

II. REFERENCES