

Chapter XX

The Use of a Hybrid Model in Web-Based Education: “The Global Campus Project”

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the key sectors that benefited from the continuous developments and innovations in information and communication technology. The changes have affected the concepts of teaching, the methodologies used in class and online and the delivery mechanisms providing multiple opportunities for educators and scholars to engage in an invaluable knowledge-based environment that represents a unique opportunity for educators and scholars around the world to benefit and excel in their disciplines. In that respect, one of the technologies stemming from the innovations in information and communication technology has been Web-based education as a medium for learning and a vehicle for information dissemination and knowledge delivery. However, Web-based education has been implemented using different methodologies to maximize the quality level, where a primary concern has always been whether Web-based education matches traditional teaching mechanisms. Covered in this chapter is the experience of the Global Campus (GC) project whose idea is the delivery of academic programs using a hybrid model of traditional and unconventional methods. The project is a collaboration between the Regional IT Institute (Egypt) and Middlesex University (United Kingdom), aiming at delivering postgraduate education to the community in Egypt, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom, while capitalizing on cutting-edge information and communication technology.

The focus in this chapter is on demonstrating the lessons learned from managing a model for a globally extended enterprise in the education sector through a partnership agreement between the different parties that capitalizes on the opportunities enabled by the Internet, which is probably the most transformative technology in history, reshaping business, media, entertainment, and society in astonishing ways but also perceived to dramatically transform the learning process.

INTRODUCTION

Egypt is the cradle of an ancient civilization dating back to 3000 BC. Currently, with a population of more than 68 million (www.idsc.gov.eg), there are more than 19 million in the workforce and over 16 million enrolled in education (Kamel, 1999a, 2000). Cairo, the capital of Egypt, like many developing nations, possesses most of the advanced infrastructure and resources. However, since the late 1980s, as part of the comprehensive structural adjustment program carried out by the government of Egypt and strongly supported by the private sector, many investments and infrastructure buildups have been carried out across Egypt's 27 provinces (Kamel, 1999b). Computing was introduced in Egypt in the 1960s, and it was spread due to the presence of a number of multinationals within a number of sectors; however, it was still limited to a number of applications and industries (Kamel, 1999b). In 1985, information technology diffusion and building a comprehensive information base was put on the national agenda as a priority and as a building block of Egypt's business and socioeconomic development process.

During the period 1985–1999, massive developments were introduced in the information and communication technology sector, with thousands of training centers and projects launched to introduce information and communication technology into different sectors and diffuse its various uses and applications (Kamel, 2002). Most of these projects and initiatives were launched and co-initiated by the Cabinet of Egypt, Information and Decision Support Center. IDSC is a government think-tank that was established in 1985 to support top policy and decision makers to introduce information technology in decision-making processes and to help in building the nation's information infrastructure. Moreover, to strengthen the nation's strategic plan to integrate advanced information and communication technology into its developmental plans, in 1999, the ministry of information and communication technology (MCIT) was established to help accelerate the efforts for building an ICT literate society capable of competing on a global scale and keeping pace with the new trends of the digital economy. Parallel to the establishment of the ministry, a national plan was formulated to help build the nation's information infrastructure (NII) and to invest in people to support in the formulation of a knowledge-based society to close the digital divide between the haves and have nots in Egypt and also between Egypt and other developed nations (Kamel, 2002).

The focus in this chapter is on demonstrating the experience of the Global Campus¹ project, a collaboration between the Regional IT Institute (Egypt) and Middlesex University (UK), in managing a successful partnership to deliver postgraduate education through a hybrid model capitalizing on innovative information and communication technology as well as traditional learning techniques, where the promise of widely available high-quality Web-based education is made possible by technological and communications trends that could lead to important educational applications (www.hpcnet.org/Webcommission). Moreover, also stressed in this chapter is the importance of the learning process among partners to be

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