



Chapter XIII

The Web as a Learning Environment for Kids: Case Study: “Little Horus”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Internet and the World Wide Web are demonstrating the growing influence of information and communication technologies in various aspects of the economy. Regardless of the barriers of time and distance, newly introduced information highways are linking the world countries together, their societies and cultures contributing effectively to globalization. One of the growing trends in societal development and growth is investment in people. Therefore, the learning process is a priority issue that information and communication technologies are serving trying to upgrade and leverage human resources to become more competitive as we approach the 21st century with all its challenges and opportunities.

This chapter covers an initiative that was launched in Egypt in 1997 that targets the investment of Egypt's young generation, the kids of the present and the leaders of the future. This initiative is part of a national plan that aims at leveraging the capacities of Egypt's human resources. The focus of the chapter will be the learning process, the Internet and the presence of the first Egyptian Web site for children on the Internet “Little Horus.” With the introduction of the Internet since 1993 in Egypt, today there are around 250,000 Internet subscribers, among which are a growing community of schools, teachers and children.

As the Internet grows in magnitude and capacity, perceived to reach over one million subscribers in the coming five years with an estimated 20 percent under the age of 16, the Internet and the World Wide Web could play an active role in the education process in Egypt. The chapter, therefore, will demonstrate the “Little Horus” initiative, the steps that were achieved so far, the plan for the future and the building blocks that represented the critical success factors for the realization of this initiative with relatively modest resources.

INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web has become the vital means of information and knowledge dissemination in today’s global environment. With the variety and diversity of professions from a chief executive officer to a clerk, from a school principal to a first grader, everybody at some point in time is in need of timely, accurate and relevant information. Currently, the World Wide Web is becoming the world’s main source of on-line information with implications on many sectors in the economy (Bangemann, 1994). This growing knowledge base available on the Internet represents a building block in the global information highway with implications on the individual, the organization and the society at large.

With the growing role of information and communication technology and its implications on daily life, no one can ignore the vital role played by the Internet (Alvarez, 1996). It is the fastest, easiest and richest means of information and knowledge dissemination not only as information provider, but also as network connector around the world regardless of time and space. This helps to create a global and border-less society of knowledge seekers, providers and coordinators. The Internet as a communication medium has also helped bring the world closer towards the realization of the global village (Naisbitt, 1984).

The Internet is developing a wealth of knowledge through Web sites, Web pages and information sources for adults (Pedroni www.geocities.com). However, if societies are building for their future there is a need to think of the proper formulation of tomorrow’s generations. It is important to think of the best way to prepare kids to survive in the cyber environment and the information society. Statistics show that one third of the world’s population are kids between the age of 4 and 15 and today over 18 million kids are using the Internet. These kids need more than games, electronic mail and simple naviga-

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