

Sociological and Political Aspects of E-Learning in Developing Countries

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Abstract: In this paper we discuss some of the sociological and political aspects of e-learning in developing countries taking into account various differences in different developing countries. Then we state the advantages of spreading e-learning in those countries and give several recommendations and conclusions for the future.

Key-Words: E-Learning – Developing Countries – Developed Countries – Sociological and Political Aspects – Traditional Learning

1 Introduction

We discuss the main sociological and political aspects of e-learning in different developing countries, which differ in their profiles, as for Egypt and Bahrain for example. Then we give various advantages of spreading e-learning in all developed countries together with some recommendations for the future.

In Section 2 the definitions' kernel and development of e-learning are given.

Some characteristics in different developing countries influencing enhancement of e-learning are given in section 3.

The advantages of enhancing e-learning in developing countries are given in section 4.

E-learning versus traditional learning is discussed in section 5.

In section 6 our recommendations for the future are given.

Finally the conclusion is then given in section 7.

2 Definitions' Kernel and Development of E-Learning

Several definitions exist for e-learning but the kernel is always the same: Learning through electronic technology (see [1], [2], [3]).

E-learning started in the early seventies in some developed countries like USA, Canada and Australia followed by other European countries and China in the eighties (see [4]). At present e-learning is spread in many countries around the world with millions of registered students and expected to circulate enormously in the near

future in both developed and developing countries.

3 Characteristics Influencing Enhancement of E-Learning in Different Developing Countries

To study the situation of e-learning in developing countries we have to consider following differences:

- a) Total population which ranges between some hundred thousands and some ten millions, for example Bahrain with about 600 thousands inhabitants and Egypt with over 70 millions.
- b) Financial facilities which are rather good in some countries like Bahrain and poor due to limited resources or spending on other purposes rather than for supporting individuality and independence of the mass in some countries like Egypt.
- c) Technical and financial support of developed countries which differs from one country to another, for example the massive support for some countries like Israel is not to be compared with the rather rare support given to some other countries like Sudan.
- d) Geographical situation ranging from well situated developing countries like Egypt existing between 3 continents and bad situated countries far away from Europe and USA like the southern countries in Africa.
- e) Total area of the country in order to facilitate installing labs and equipments ranging from a small area like Bahrain and a huge area like Egypt.
- f) Number of teaching institutes and universities and their standards compared to international acknowledged measures. This

aspect is quite good in a country like Egypt and quite bad in a country like Yemen.

- g) Percentage of non-alphabetical people of the total population which is very high in some African countries and very low in some Asian countries.
- h) Governing politics ranging between dictatorship and partial democracy.
- i) Existence of institutes and/or universities offering e-learning like the Open University in Bahrain with over than 3000 students registered.

To spread e-learning in developing countries one must consider the characteristics given above as follows:

- a) For countries with huge total populations like Egypt for example one should locate the places with relatively large numbers of educated people to offer technological and financial help, while in Bahrain with its small population and rather good financial situation one has mainly to inform the people about the advantages of e-learning.
- b) Appealing to developing countries to invest more in educational and technological sectors to assure better futuristic aspects to their people.
- c) Appealing to developed countries to direct more of its technological and financial support to needy developing countries.
- d) Enhancing communications between different situated developing countries like between Egypt and Gambia for example.
- e) Distributing the facilities like labs and equipments to places with low social and financial profiles.
- f) Some developing countries have a large number of institutes and universities having relatively good international standards, like Egypt

- for example. Those institutes and universities should play an essential role of spreading e-learning with own initiations and communications to other institutes and universities with experience of e-learning in developed countries.
- g) In the long run with the increase of educated people, whether through traditional or e-learning, the help given to non-alphabetical portion of the inhabitants should increase as well.
 - h) Appealing to governments of some developing countries to develop sociological and political aspects for the well-being of the people in general and especially in the fields of education and modern technology.
 - i) Directing more support from developing countries to those progressive universities in developing countries which started e-learning like the open university in Bahrain.
 - e) Social and sociological development through the students using e-learning, their families, friends and communities.
 - f) Decrease of immigration of educated people to developed countries which represents a big problem for the developing countries at present.
 - g) Decrease of non-alphabetical percentage of the population who will get more support from more educated people.
 - h) Increase of access to all kinds of information, especially locally in some countries.
 - i) Integration in the world society, politically, socially, economically, etc.
 - j) Enhancement of global communications.
 - k) More opportunities for young students to study in their countries and not abroad.
 - l) More opportunities for continuing study for adult, especially minorities like women and retirees.

4 Advantages of Spreading E-Learning in Developing Countries

The advantages of e-learning in general like flexibility in time and position, using a huge variety of resources, improving communication locally and globally,...etc. are of course valid for both developed and developing countries.

Additional advantages for developing countries are as follows:

- a) Gain of more local political influence of the people.
- b) Strengthen economic situation through positive changes and restructures of local economy and opening to the world markets.
- c) Faster adaptation to globalization.
- d) Increase of educated people in their fields as well as in modern technologies.

5 E-Learning versus Traditional Learning in Developing Countries

We do believe that enhancing e-learning is a necessity at present but do not believe it should replace traditional learning neither in developed nor developing countries (see [5], [6]).

Considering the technical and financial difficulties in many developing countries the classical question in developed countries: would e-learning replace traditional learning in future? is irrelevant.

A gradual introducing of e-learning is expected but not the complete replacement of traditional learning.

6 Recommendations

To spread e-learning in developing countries we recommend following measures:

- a) Technical support of developed countries to developing countries through different ways, for example by sending experts to those countries or offering scholarships to educate talented people from developing countries to learn in the developed countries. Another possibility is to hold international conferences about e-learning in some developing countries.
- b) Financial support of developed countries by installing necessary equipments in labs in populated regions.
- c) Informing the people in developing countries about the advantages of e-learning taking into consideration their educational and social structures.
- d) More support for developing countries with partially democratic systems.
- e) Starting e-learning with community-oriented subject like agriculture in Egypt and banking in the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- f) Educating the educators who are going to run the system.
- g) Enhancing scientific communications between institutes and universities in developed and developing countries, especially those with long experience in e-learning.

7 Conclusion

Spreading of e-learning in all developing countries according to their sociological and political aspects is highly recommended. In all those countries an intensive informative educative campaign is accordingly very important.

Due to its important role in social and development aspects traditional learning should not be replaced by e-learning in developing countries.

Potential technological support of all developed countries like Bahrain is a necessity

Generous financial support from developed countries to economically weak developing countries like Egypt for example should be granted. This financial support must be directed to the needy people and not to governments which do not appreciate supporting the spread of e-learning for political reasons.

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