University of Huddersfield Repository

Elzawi, Abdussalam, Kenan, Thuraya, Wade, Steve and Pislaru, Crinela

Exploratory study of the attitudes of academic staff in Libyan Universities towards the role of the Internet

Original Citation

Elzawi, Abdussalam, Kenan, Thuraya, Wade, Steve and Pislaru, Crinela (2013) Exploratory study of the attitudes of academic staff in Libyan Universities towards the role of the Internet. 8th International Conference for Internet Technology and Secured Transactions ICITST 2013. pp. 490-493.

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/20236/

Exploratory study of the attitudes of academic staff in Libyan Universities towards the role of the Internet

Abdussalam Elzawi
Computing & Engineering School
University of Huddersfield
Huddersfield -UK
Abdussalam.Elzawi@hud.ac.uk

Thuraya Kenan
Computing & Engineering School
University of Huddersfield
Huddersfield -UK
Thuraya.kenan@hud.ac.uk

Steve Wade
Computing & Engineering School
University of Huddersfield
Huddersfield -UK
S.j.wade@hud.ac.uk

Crinela Pislaru
Computing & Engineering School
University of Huddersfield
Huddersfield -UK
C.pislaru@hud.ac.uk

Abstract— **This study has been directed to disclose the attitudes of academic staff in Libyan universities towards Internet-based learning and training. The research for this study has been conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings suggest that faculty members have positive attitudes towards integrating the Internet into the teaching process and an expectation that this will dramatically change the nature of higher education in Libya over the next few years. The need for inclusive strategic planning and effective implementation plans and strategies is discussed.**

Keywords- e-learning; internet technologies; Information Communication Technology; Higher Education; knowledge management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern societies are characterized by continuous training for their individuals. It is an important and indispensable factor for individual social mobility. [1] Stated that, " training has always played an important and an integral part in furthering many kinds of human learning and development. However, the fact that training can make an important, if not crucial, contribution to organizational effectiveness is only now being recognized fully. This means, the content of training varies according to the training objectives, characteristics of the trainees and their levels. [2]

Because the Libya faculty members aware about the importance of new technology. They also have interest of using information technology into their teaching. They believe the Internet-based training is an important solution for those who cannot come to the campus to study and train. The availability of e-training opportunities in the workplace in Libya is not evenly distributed. Special circumstances influence this availability. Libyan employees, in general, have secure jobs, especially in the public sector. This means they do not have big incentives to change and develop. The literature search shows that there is not a lot of material on this topic. Therefore, in this study, to avoid the conflict, which arises out the above views, the study has mixed between quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data on attitudes. For the most time, when these methods work together they can play their roles in terms of finding and confirmation the facts and the reality. The data that obtain from the questionnaires and interviews has been analysis by the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for questionnaire data. As far as the research can see, training via the Internet is still a new domain, and there are no empirical Libya studies that qualitatively and quantitatively support or reject Internet-based training. The expectations of this study that it will be become the beginning of other studies in this field. Furthermore, it can contribute to provide a wider understanding of e-learning and training in Libya universities and higher institutions. However, it could help universities, higher education institutions and the workforce in public and private organizations in Libya to reap and benefits from the new technology.

II. THE NEED FOR INTERNET-BASED TRAINING IN LIBYAN HEIs.

The service training is considered one of the important factors in improving the employees' skills, knowledge and abilities. In addition, in the last few years the Internet-based training has appeared for all employees in different sectors whether in or out their jobs all over the world. It is highly important to reference some factors related to these issues in Libya society as follows:

- The number of employees is very large in different sectors in Libya.

- Employees have fewer chances to join traditional training classroom during their work time.

- The Libya has just recently started using the Internet services. This with reference to modernity of the Internet.

- Nowadays, most people in Libya do not have enough knowledge about Internet services.

- Technological progress and the knowledge explosion compel the employee to participate in the training programmers to keep pace with these changes.

- In-service training via the Internet is considered less costly and saves time and money. As a result of these factors, Libya universities and higher educations should adopt such this kind of training.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study included the entire education faculty members in Libyan universities, ranking instructor/lecturer, and assistant, associate, and full professors. Five open-ended questions were asked to all of the participants. The email interview questions were constructed after receiving the results of the instrument survey questionnaire. The interview questions built on the information attained from the literature and from the analysis of the questionnaire. Five open-ended questions were asked of all of the participants. This was implemented in order to obtain the participants own comments and their point of view regarding utilizing the Internet for academic work. Of the 40 original faculty members, only 16 (40%) answered the questions and returned their responses via email. More information about the participants can be seen in table I:

TABEL I: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY.

Demographics	Characteristics	Res. No.	%
The Name of University	Uni. of Tripoli	3	31.25 %
	Uni. of Alzawia	3	31.25 %
	Uni. of Misurata	6	37.50 %
	Uni. of Benghazi	2	12.50 %
	Uni. of Sirte	2	12.50 %
Gender	Male	12	75.00 %
	Female	4	25.00 %
Academic Rank	Instructor/lecturer	5	31.50 %
	Assistant professor	6	37.50 %
	Associate professor	4	25.00 %
	professor	1	6.25 %
Age	25 - 30	2	12.50 %
	31- 37	4	25.00 %
	38 - 45	6	37.50 %
	46 - 55	2	12.50 %
	More 55	2	12.50 %
Years Teaching experience	1 - 5	4	25.00 %
	6 - 11	8	50.00 %
	12 - 17	2	12.50 %

IV. THE FINDING OF THE STUDY

A. Obstacles

The Libyan academic staff thought that there is some obstacles will face the Internet-based training in Libyan society. The analysis of the questionnaires revealed a considerable amount of consistency in the responses that means the high majority of respondents thought that there is many obstacles will face the development of IT and Internet-based training in Libyan society and higher education in the future. For example, in the questionnaire responses, more than eighty nine percent (89.00%) of academic staff indicated that they deemed that lack of IT training is one of the main obstacles of using and integrating the Internet into the academic teaching they need much more specific training to enable them to use the Internet effectively. The communication infrastructure according to some of the respondents thought is a big obstacle, such as one of them thought:

"The most important obstacle we face now is the communication problem, especially during peak hours, which means that the communication infrastructure is not good and not adequate enough." This is related in their mind to the question of trust. However, the lack of existence of experts adapted to the mode of Internet-based learning and training is considered to be obstacle. One of the interviewee believed that:

"The experts are a necessity and to find them will not be an easy job, starting from early planning and preparation for learning processes." The commons belief is that distance learning or E-learning is of a lower quality than traditionally taught course [3].

B. The Advantages

There appears to be a large degree of consistency in the academic staff answers provided in both the questionnaires.

It is evident that the questionnaire as well as the interview answers given by respondents was in agreement that the high majority of questionnaires' respondents that there are a lot of advantages of using the Internet into teaching process, such as the Internet offers flexibility of time and place in learning. Besides, real-time updating of skills is a great advantage of distance Internet-based education. Some of them deemed that Information technology as a vital new resource for academics, it enables quick access to new research data and it is easier to search for materials. While some respondents thought IT sharpen the learner skills in using this service and give him the knowledge he needs which is an important in different level.

Another advantage for Libyan universities, it will solve the shortage in academic staff particularly women staff. The shortage of academic staff is a serious problem in Libya higher education,

especially in relation to women staff and students. Lady academic staff from College of Science at Alzawia University stressed that the online learning and training will fill the gap in the shortage of faculty members, as she thought:

"It will solve the shortage in academic staff and will increase the number of students, which is limited due to the limited number of labs and classrooms, in addition to enhancing the access to information." Also, since 2000 there has been an increase in interest in technology in many HEIs in Libya, and more institutions are spending more of their budgets on providing an ICT infrastructure [4]. In fact, the Ministry of Higher Education, which is by law responsible for endorsing degrees from foreign universities, will not endorse a degree obtained through either distance learning or E-learning. Without the approval of the Ministry, students cannot gain any advantages in the workplace from their degrees [5]. This is of significant importance and could be developed.

C. Disadvantages

Majority of questionnaires' respondents thought; there are many disadvantages of integrating the Internet into teaching process. Another disadvantage of this kind of teaching is if it is not under control, it risks becoming a way just to grant certificates without good quality of courses or achievements. Some interviewees believed that interaction between trainee and trainer is one of the disadvantages of Internet-based training and learning, as he mentioned:

"It may be isolation or semi-isolation if you want to teach students using distance methods. There will be no interaction between the groups. I mean the sort of interaction between students themselves, since the interaction between who provide the service and who receives it is always there."

Also, there are barriers as the technological, cultural barriers and other barriers due to other factors such as cost, etc. The teaching load in Libyan universities is typically large, e.g. the average number of teaching hours for academic staff is 24 hours/week, and Libyan universities have not yet established a scientific research tradition [6]. Nevertheless, some academic staff does undertake extra activities such as writing and publishing, e.g. textbooks, to increase their income [7], [8]. Conclude that because the technical and technological level existing in a country largely determines the rate at which IT develops, the developing countries will not catch up easily [9].

D. Expectations of the future

Generally, all responses gathered demonstrated that the high majority are optimistic about Libya universities and colleges that they would be ready to offer distance Internet-based training courses, one of PhD student is optimistic about the future of higher education in Libya, he said: "I think this will happen in 2014 because most of our teaching happened through the Internet. A conference took place in Universities Libya and used the new technology. As regards learning and research, we found the lecture in London or USA. Their presentations came via satellite during the conference in future in our universities. Discussion of these presentations happened in the same way. I think this approach is an improvement." Male academic staff has mentioned to an important point, whereas he thinks that: "In fact some universities did not wait for this to happen, but they made an initiative and that not in particular for the universities but for the services. Some universities have seen that there is a big need for services, and some sectors have plans and began the stage of implementing them. With regard to the future of the role of universities, the finding from the questionnaires indicated that the respondents generally agreed that the role of universities and colleges would be dramatically changed because of the Internet in the future. This result conformed to the interview responses, the high majority of the interviewees emphasized that the role of Libyan faculty members and universities will be dramatically changed and the implementation of e- learning in an official setting requires inclusive strategic planning. Changing the educational offering through technology requires utilizing effective implementation plans and strategies [10].

However, there are numeric studies have been demonstrated a new strategies to implement the e-learning applications and the Internet usage in the Libyan universities.

In table II, Kenan and others presented the results of Strength, Opportunity, Weakness and Threat points as modern model of 2013 that is reflect the SWOT analysis for the main aspects, which should be considered when developing more effective e-learning implementation strategies. This model presents the reflections of the students, lecturers, and technical staff on the trial implementation. [11].

Either, Rhema and Miliszewska in 2011 have accepted a SWOT study about the e-learning implementation and identified that technological and cultural barriers are hindering the e-learning implementation in University of Gharian-Libya [12]. Artemi and Ajit [13] emphasized that many people perceive the technological barriers as being essential in the e-learning implementation because people need access to modern technology in order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning processes. SWOT analysis is an essential step to analyse various factors before implementing an e-learning solution at any institution, because the success or failure of an e-learning initiative will be directly related to the policy issues that underpins it [14], [15].

This paper could conclude from the previous SWOT studies, the policy issues and accessibility challenges, which are still face on the successful policy and suitable strategy of the internet usage by brief are mainly technological, attitudinal, and pedagogical.

TABLE II: MODERN SWOT ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF THE E-LEARNING IN LIBYAN UNIVERSITIES (LUs)[11].

Strength points	Weakness points
1. The proliferation of digital technology because majority of people are using computers and social media channels to communicate with each other. 2. Annual increase the student numbers in the LUs. 3. The need to eliminate the administrative corruption aspects. 4. Implement modern and efficient management structures in the LUs. 5. Libya has a strategic geographical location in Africa. People Niger, Sudan, Mali and Chad could use the e-learning packages developed by the companies situated in the south of Libya. Also people living at long distances from the main Libyan universities (such as Awbari, Ghat, Aljawf, Murzuq and Alkoofra) could complete their courses by distance learning.	1. Lack of training courses for the students, technical and academic staff. 2. Lack of technological support and periodic maintenance of computers. 3. Lack of online library catalogues in the LUs 3. The mismanagement and corruption. 4. Users' lack of awareness and fear of negative consequences of using technology in education processes. 5. Post-war chaos that pervades all sectors of Libyan society and economy.
Opportunity points	**Threat points**
1. The government policy system has been changed on October 2011 when it was officially declared the liberation of Libya. So the new government looks to support the LUs in all the ways. 2. Official recognition of education certificates holders of e-learning or distance education. 3. Create new business strategies to attract students from other African countries that still lack the basics of e-learning in their Higher Education Institutes. 4. Reduce the migration of skilled and intelligent people from Libya. 5. Create techno-education competitive environment with the neighboring countries. 6. Development of new courses in foreign languages (English, French, etc.) in LUs. 7. Gradual change of culture including more acceptances to of e-learning systems. 8. Geographical position of Libya in Africa plays strategic role in the successful and the necessary need to implementation of e-learning system in LUs.	1. Numerous barriers related to e-learning systems implementation. 2. Preference of using only academic traditional methods in education. 3. Lack of support from the government. 4. Increased migration of skilled and intelligent people from Libya.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, e-learning and e-training are becoming important in Libya. This study has been directed to disclose the attitudes of academic staff towards Internet-based learning and training. The findings of this study show that the faculty members have enthusiasm and keenness to integrate the Internet into the teaching process. This may offer a specific advantage for the Libyan universities, it may help to solve the shortage in academic staff particularly women staff.

This study is not intended to be the final picture of academics' attitudes for integrating the new technology in training and learning process, but beginning the start of the plan in Libya, the role of universities and colleges would be dramatically changed because of the Internet in the future. This result conformed to the interview responses; the high majority of the emphasized agree that the role of Libyan faculty members and universities will be dramatically changed. The implementation of e- learning in an official setting requires inclusive strategic planning and changing the educational offering through technology requires utilizing effective implementation plans and strategies

REFERENCES

[1] R. Buckley and J. Caple, "The theory and practice of training", third edition, London Kogan page Ltd,(1995).

[2] A. Alhamidi, "Adult education interance", 1st edition, Riyadh, alfarazdaq commercial printers,(1992).

[3] K. Abouchedid, "E-learning challenges in the Arab world: Revelations from a case study profile". Journal of Quality Assurance in Education, 2004, Vol. 12, no. 1.

[4] M.Porter, and D.Yegin, "National economic Strategy: an assessment of the competitiveness of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya". Cera.UK,(2006).

[5] A. Elzawi, and S. Wade, "Barriers to ICT adoption in quality of engineering research in Libya: how to bridge the digital divide?", 2012, in: Proceedings of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Computing and Engineering Annual Researchers' Conf.; CEARC'12. UK: University of Huddersfield. 2012, pp. 98-103 (2012).

[6] A. Elzawi, and J. Underwood, "How Higher Engineering Researchers in Libya Perceive The Use of Internet Technology". The International Arab Conf. on Information Technology (ACIT'2010), University of Garyounis, Benghazi, Libya, 2010, pp. 89-98.

[7] A. Rhema, and W. Miliszewska, "Towards E-Learning in Higher Education in Libya. Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology", (2010). Vol. 7, 423-437. Available at: < Towards E-Learning in Higher Education in Libya > [Accessed 8 Sep. 2013]

[8] T. Kenan, C. Pislaru, and A. Elzawi, "Analysing the effectiveness of e-learning based on national and international cultures and approaches to pedagogy". In: 17th UKAIS Conference on Information Systems, 2012, New College, Oxford University (2012).

[9] A. Andersson, and A. Grönlund, "A conceptual framework for e learning in developing countries: a critical review of research challenges". EJISDC, 2009, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1-16.

[10] F. Danwa, and H. Wenbin, "Research on Educational Technique Training Based on Teacher Professional Development". IEEE computer society. Second International Workshop on Education Technology and Computer Science, 2010, pp. 568-571

[11] T. Kenan, C. Pislaru, and A. Elzawi, "Trends and policy issues for the e-learning implementation in Libyan universities". In IJTEF, London. Vol. 5, No. 1.pp. 105-109. (Feb. 2014)

[12] A. Rhema, and I. Miliszewska, "Reflections on a Trial Implementation of an E-Learning Solution in a Libyan University". Issues in informing Science and information technology, 2011, Vol. 8, No.16.

[13] M. Artemi, & K. Ajit, "A SWOT Analysis of E-Learning Model for the Libyan Educational Institutions." In: UNIVERSITY, A.-A. (ed.) The 3rd National Conference of Basic Science. Aljabal-Algharbi University, 2009, Gharian – Libya.

[14] T. Kenan, C. Pislaru, and A. Elzawi, "Novel SWOT Analysis of E-learning Implementation in HE Institutions in Libya". In: International journal on E-learning (IJEL): Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), 2013. to be published.

[15] T. Kenan, C. Pislaru, A. Othman, and A. Elzawi, "The social impact and cultural issues affecting the e-learning performance in Libyan Higher Education institutes". International Journal of Information Technology & Computer Science (IJITCS). Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 50-56, (Dec. 2013).