Adoption of Knowledge Management and Net Generation Characteristics in eLearning Communities in Saudi Arabia

Abdullah M. Alammari, University of Technology Sydney, Australia and
Academic Lecturer at Umm Al-Qura University, Faculty of Education, Curriculums and Teaching
Technology Department, Saudi Arabia
a.alammari@student.uts.edu.au

Daniel Chandran, Deputy Head of School, School of Systems, Management and Leadership, Faculty
of Engineering and Information Technology, University of Technology Sydney, Australia,
Daniel.Chandran@uts.edu.au

Abstract

E-Learning and Knowledge management are crucial for educational institutions and organizations due to the massive amount of knowledge that now exists within and outside those organizations. This paper analyses the current relationship between eLearning, knowledge management and Net-generation in Saudi Arabia. Due to the lack of research in this area in Saudi Arabia, there is a need to address issues when applying eLearning in Saudi Arabia. A mechanism to include knowledge management practice within eLearning in the Saudi learning and training environment is an important aim and need for this study. Similarly, Net-generation personalization in eLearning in Saudi Arabia is absent since the access to social websites and YouTube by learners or staff is limited. This paper proposes a best practice model for improvement in eLearning and training through technology innovations and knowledge management that should be included in the eLearning processes.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, eLearning, Net Generation.

Introduction

The technology revolution recently has increased the demand for provision of electronic learning (eLearning). Cooper et al. (2004) define eLearning as the process of delivering educational and training courses using electronic devices. In this information age, knowledge management is an important strategy in organisations due to the availability of vast amounts of information and knowledge within and outside the organisation (He, Xiang and Chen 2009, p.426). Knowledge management can be described as the way of capturing knowledge, communicating and using this knowledge to achieve the organisation's objectives and thus increasing the organisation's performance in all aspects (Chandani, Neeraja and Sreedevi 2007, p.1063). Hricko (2008) defined Net-generation or Z-generation as those who born in the period from 1980 to 1995, and raised in the digital era.

Educational institutions can promote the transfer of tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge through the process of obtaining, handling, sharing and applying knowledge (He, Xiang and Chen 2009, p.426). None the less, some barriers such as lack of time; support and trust impede the implementation of a successful knowledge management system in eLearning.

E-Learning is suitable for delivering knowledge for all categories of learners (Frank & Liebowitz 2011). For example, employees who wish to pursue further development of their educational qualifications can achieve this using eLearning which does not require them to attend traditional classes. This feature of eLearning is a core advantage, seducing students and workers who cannot take time off from their jobs but want to advance their current knowledge and skills. However, Net-generation is highly technical and has personalization preferences characteristics when it comes to the way of learning and sharing knowledge (Bariso 2010).

Based on this, the relationship between eLearning, learners' characteristics and knowledge management is clear and a deep research to find a mechanism to link the three disciplines is highly in

training. This is a clear indication of the government's commitment in developing human knowledge and learning infrastructure.

There are numerous investments to adopt and build eLearning infrastructures in Saudi at university levels and organizational levels. E-learning projects in Saudi Arabia have not considered the best practice model that should be designed to suit the current and future revolution in knowledge and information technologies.

This research seeks to add value in the process of developing eLearning communities in Saudi Arabia which has an attractive and demanding market for eLearning products. In this project, a best practice eLearning model will be developed based on the highlighted need that has been emerged to consider knowledge management strategies and Net-generation characteristics (Frank & Liebowitz 2011).

E-Learning and knowledge management both address knowledge creation, transfer, share and communication (Frank & Liebowitz 2011). Thus, knowledge management and eLearning can be used as effective tools for developing the Saudi training and educational initiatives.

Net-generation learners have technological skills and tend to involve in cyber social practices over the Internet to meet and communicate with different people who have the same interests; they do not engage effectively in a static learning environment but rather prefer to have dynamic learning environments that supports learning process.

Current Situation of E-Learning in Saudi Arabia:

It is important to investigate the current situation of eLearning in Saudi Arabia to obtain a clear understanding of the learning levels. In other words, analyzing the current environment of education can help to find out what are the key challenges of current educational levels that leave Saudi Arabia behind in relation to the education standards worldwide.

Generally, to look at the educational system in Saudi, Moussa and Moussa (2009) draw the attention to several factors making the education level in developing countries poor that also applies to Saudi Arabia which recently has established eLearning projects:

a) University students and school students memorize information they study more than they think, analyze and criticize. So, they are mainly receivers for the information to record the knowledge until the exams period in order to pass their subjects, and then they delete what they had memorized. Indeed, the memorized information will be forgotten neutrally as they were not based on thinking and analyzing manner of learning which can deliver the knowledge to be owned and developed by further learning.

b) There is a clear absence for the teamwork and interactive teaching in the Saudi educational institutions which currently reflect on the recent Saudi eLearning communities just launched.

c) With no doubt, greater precedence is given to quantity and less priority to quality of the materials used in the teaching process.

d) Lack of update for curriculum, teaching methods, learning gears and the educational knowledge sharing procedures among students and staff.

e) Less interest from educators and students in applying progressive and interactive education or eLearning as students have not engaged and participated in the eLearning process; they are still considered as only receivers for knowledge.

Outcome

Adopting and developing such and integrated model in the Saudi eLearning environment, will facilitate free access to *Knowledge Assets Base* which consists of knowledge archives and learning objects history. All eLearning stakeholders can have the advantage of knowledge management to create, capture and communicate or share the community's knowledge to achieve eLearning goals; and this will lead to the educational organization goals achievement as well. It offers learners an access to knowledge for better education to reach organizations goals (Islam, M.S. et al. 2011).

Indeed, implementing eLearning technologies in Saudi Arabia without management strategies for the eLearning community is a drawback. Therefore, knowledge management for eLearning community in Saudi Arabia should be adopted and developed to enhance the current and future learning and teaching/training systems in Saudi Arabia. Importantly, integrating knowledge management and eLearning has been reported as a need in recent research and it can help to achieve the satisfactory level of the education outcome in Saudi Arabia since the Saudi government has allocated 24% of its annual budget to develop education and training.

Conclusion

E-Learning model based on knowledge management and Net-generation personalization can lead to solve the scarcity in Saudi eLearning communities. The proposed model can be suitable for future trends in online learning that has been open for massive online courses from different parts of the world (MOOC). It has been argued that future learning contents creation and development is an ongoing process by all parties involved in the learning and training community. So, the massive amount of knowledge that will be dealt within online learning communities cannot be managed and used effectively without knowledge management techniques. This research will lead to a best practice model that can be used in Saudi Arabia. However, a further research in this area is highly needed.

References

Bariso, E.U. 2010, 'Personalized eLearning in Further Education', *Technology-Supported Environments for Personalized Learning: Methods and Case Studies*, IGI Global, pp. 109-27.

Chandani, A., Neeraja, B., & Sreedevi, (2007). Knowledge management: An overview & its impact on software industry. Information and Communication Technology in Electrical Sciences (ICTES 2007), 2007. ICTES. IET-UK International Conference on, 1063-1068.

Cooper, C., Taft, L.B. & Thelen, M. 2004, 'Examining the role of technology in learning: An evaluation of online clinical conferencing', *Journal of Professional Nursing*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 160-6.

Frank, M.S. & Liebowitz, J. 2011, *Knowledge management and e-learning*, Auerbach Publications, Boca Raton, FL.

Hricko, M. 2008, 'Net Generation', *Encyclopedia of Information Technology Curriculum Integration*, IGI Global, pp. 616-9.

Islam, M., Kunifuji, S., Miura, M. 2011 'adopting knowledge management in an E-learning system: Insights and Views of KM and E-L Research Scholars', *Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International journal*, Vol. 3, No. 3, PP. 375-397, viewed 1 March 2013, < http://www.kmel-journal.org/ojs/index.php/online-publication/article/viewFile/126/104>.