A Comprehensive Look into the Role of E-learning Strategy in Higher Education

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Abstract — E-learning becomes a significant quality strategy to increase the reputation of the higher education institutions through service differentiation. It is also a credible attempt for the developing countries to create a brand and help promotion of the country through higher education practices. As e-learning strategy has no limit of time, space and distance, it helps reach out to learners all around the world for multicultural learning and at the same time provides an opportunity to foster a life-long learning approach for the adult learners. In this respect, this study aims to reveal the importance of e-learning strategy for enhancing the quality standards in higher education services. Further to this, it aims to underline the impact of e-learning strategy in higher education practices and its role to foster life-long learning process as regards the overall evaluation of higher education institutions in North Cyprus. The case study approach is employed to examine current situation of the context based on documentary analysis. The research reveals that e-learning is the quality strategy in higher education to expand the capacity and reputation.

Index Terms — competitive strategy, e-learning, higher education.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Role of E-learning in Higher Education

Giving priority to the integration of technology, technology based curriculum is the initiative action of higher education. The success comes through integrated technology lessons, and applications in order to make meaningful learners’ standpoint for the quality. The focus of higher education for their services are considered as what the learner needs, how the knowledge and skills should be taught with considering both pedagogical and organizational practices. In this respect, e-learning practices satisfy the changing expectation of learners and quality in higher education systems [1]. E-learning practices in higher education systems facilitate collaboration, flexibility for eliminating digital divide and enhancing internalization through multiculturalism by diverse learning and learners for competitive world. In addition, the higher education institutions can gain competitive advantage for their service quality upon e-learning strategy.

In the higher education sector, there is competitiveness among higher education institutions to be most preferable and reputable institutions based on their policies and strategies. As learners are the centre of the education, their satisfactions and expectations from the market become crucial for the higher education sector. In order to achieve credible reputation and attention among higher education institutions, being different in terms of service differentiation became inevitable. In this respect, e-learning practices in higher education open a debate on how quality of assurance can be ensured in order to have both service differentiation to gain competitive advantage and to be reputable based on quality standards. E-learning is a strategic way with no limitations of distance, time and location to involve in learning process.

However, it is not an easy task which quality of assurance within programs needs to be discussed as a whole (including pedagogic process and organizational practices). In developing countries, the e-learning strategy becomes currently popular and most of the institutions are in the adaptation process as preliminary stage. North Cyprus is one of the developing countries that higher education significant economic welfare has more than six higher education institutions. In this paper, North Cyprus higher education system and e-learning practices within the system is the case which documents and literature provide to reveal current situation and propose suggestions for future.

All universities program and courses are accredited by Higher Education Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council. Although North Cyprus is a developing country, attention is paid to quality in higher education practices with the support of Higher Education Planning, Evaluation, Accreditation and Coordination Council of the country. Similar to higher education program and courses in more than six universities, e-learning practices are considered as significant to be ensured quality assurance, however all higher education institutions are in the establishment stage to diffuse e-learning as strategy for service differentiation. Upon documentary analysis, it can be underlined that the model can be proposed to acquire best practice of e-learning with considering both pedagogical and organizational aspects to reflect e-learning as competitive strategy and ensure quality standards with service differentiation. In the higher education sector, e-learning programme and courses create alternative opportunities as quality strategy which information and communication technologies foster learning and teaching process.
All around the world, it is a hot issue that standards and guidelines for quality assurance in e-learning reformulated. In e-learning programmes, quality should be addressed and adapted to existing methods of quality assessment, quality aspects for e-learning need to be integrated into existing quality assurance system. Further to this, five quality aspects of e-learning need to be practiced: Information and communication technology, planning and structure, teacher skills, adjustment to student needs, infrastructure and organization.

Based on these quality aspects, there should be institutional vision and mission, quality assurance mechanism (policies regarding students, teaching staff, infrastructure and external relations; internal and external strategic position for decision taking circuit; learning outcomes and study programme, instructional design and assessment need to be incorporated [2]. In terms of institutional and programme dynamics, higher education institutions in North Cyprus are still in the preliminary stage with the awareness of e-learning strategy for the quality and academic development. As the same with the other practices in the world, universities are working hard to set standards and guidelines in e-learning [2].

B. Raising the International Profile of North Cyprus Higher Education.

According to the report, [3] the global market for e-learning in various parts of the world which include; USA, Europe, Asia, and Africa is significant and increasing. It is reported that e-learning is one of the fastest growing sectors all over the world in education and training market. By giving the details of e-learning developments which have taken place in Asia and Africa, the report concludes that more than 120 universities in Japan have installed a communications satellite system for organizing lectures, seminars, and meetings, while developing countries are also making extensive use of distance learning. Institutions of higher learning have increasingly begun to re-think the way that students learn and instructors instruct in response to the digital age of the net-gen student [4] [5] [6].

Using technology and e-learning is very important if we are to maintain the world-class provision of North Cyprus higher education for quality assurance. It can also help institutions in enhancing curriculum development and delivery, attracting overseas students, which is mentioned in engaging with the Bologna process. Staff teaching an increasingly diverse student body will benefit from access to relevant information and resources. In addition, more flexible approaches offered by distance learning and open educational resources will give international learners access to better course information, and assist with the recruitment and retention of these learners.

II. THE PROPOSED MODEL

A. Synergy for E-learning Quality

As regards to the quality assurance of e-learning and quality attempts in higher education system, the proposed model can be practiced within the system. Enhancing learning and teaching through the use of technology and quality in higher education, there should be a strategy to proceed quality on online pedagogy, participative management in organizational aspects, improving employability and skills; research based activities for the pedagogical and organizational aspects; diffusing digital citizenship and learning literacy throughout the higher education system [7].

The proposed model components need to be synergy and practiced in this context in order to cope with global standards in higher education [8]. All higher education institutions need to frame pedagogical development and organizational practice for quality in e-learning process. The e-learning process facilitates courses to diffuse lifelong learning philosophy to all sectors within the country for personnel development. Further to this, it provides courses within the campus to support learning. Also, it can provide courses and programmes for the learners who are not in the campus that all these practices may create a competitive advantage within the system. Similar to pedagogical development in e-learning, organizational communication and development is very significant to gain success within the system. In this respect, there is a significant need to deliver orientation programmes on organizational communication, participative management, tutor and learners roles in order to internalize the e-learning system as a whole practice.

Internalization on online pedagogy, well equipped personnel, research based activities, participative management are the crucial components to foster quality and synergy in e-learning practice. Based on this model, the e-learning strategy upon the life-long learning philosophy in higher education may help country recognition, quality and development.
III. CONCLUSION

E-learning has grown significantly over the last decade to become a significant mode of instruction in higher education. Hardly surprising then that the potential influence of e-learning on universities is the focus of much current interest and widely divergent views. Much of the discussion has focused on its possible impact on university teaching, but increasingly the debate has widened to discussion of its potential influence on some fundamental, if contentious issues, among them access equity, the quality of university education, and even the preservation of academic freedom.

The proposed model shed a light to understand how e-learning needs to be practiced in this context and may other contexts gain insights from the practice.

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