The Impact of Moving From Traditional Method of Learning to e-learning or Distance Learning on student-teacher relationship

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The traditional method of teaching was the only main method used until the previous decade. Currently, modern technologies have become involved in most universities as a policy of the ministry. “The educational process is based on three pillars: Teacher, educational content, and the learner. Our task - in short is to redefine these three pillars and their involvement in order to create a civilization leap, emerging from the higher education sector and stretching, in the remote horizon, to make learning general principle knowledge, and a daily culture of the various members of the community.”, Ministry of Higher Education Mission (MOHE, 2011). This paper focuses on the impact of new modern methods of learning such as e-learning and distance learning that may impact on learner and lecturer relationships. ELearning and distance learning have advantages and disadvantages which are important to consider when making instructional and learning decisions. This research investigates this impact from five perspectives of relationship; expert power, referent power, self-confidence, reliance and connectedness. The impact on students and lecturers needs to be considered when moving from traditional methods to e-learning or distance learning.
Introduction

Using internet online resources is the backbone of e-learning. E-learning is the utilization of network technology to achieve the function of passing on knowledge at anytime and anywhere (Pan et al., 2010). The theory of modern teaching approaches, such as e-learning, distance learning and online learning is based on the online web systems (Harb, 2011). The first e-learning system was set up early 1990 (GURPINAR Erol 2009) however, using e-learning in Saudi Arabia is fairly recent compared to the first appearance (Simsim, 2011). According to many studies in this field, there are many obstacles facing Educational Institutions in moving from traditional methods of education to the modern method which depends completely on using web technologies. Challenges are related to resources (human, materials, and financial); organization and management (reporting relationships, links and authority, freelance versus controlled administration); technical and infrastructure (availability of enough technical support; capacity and coverage of telecommunication) (Al-Shehri, 2010, Alqurashi).

Method

A questionnaire was distributed to a wide range of students in higher education to gather data about their experience of using web technology in their education. The questionnaire consists of 45 close-ended 7-point likert scale questions rating from ‘strongly disagree’ (1) to ‘strongly agree’ (7), and 5 open-ended questions, which are excluded in this research paper. The questions are divided into six groups, where each group does not link to the others. Each one measures the specific impact of web technology on the student-teacher relationship: Group 1: Expert power which measures how students’ knowledge gained from using online resources has impacted on the relationship with their lecturer as a knowledgeable person; Group 2: Referent power which measures how students’ knowledge gained from using online resources has impacted on the relationship with their lecturer as he/she consider a role model; Group 3: Self-confidence which measures how students’ knowledge gained from using online resources has impacted on their self-confidence; Group 4: Reliance which measures how students’ knowledge gained from using online resources has impacted on their reliance on their lectures as they consider the main source of knowledge in classroom; Group 5: Connectedness which measures how student communication with their lecturers using web technologies has impacted in the relationship with them. An open-ended question has been added to each group to allow participants to provide reasons why using technology has impacted/not impacted in their relationship with their lecturers.
Process

Data collected from 36 public and private universities/educational institutions selected from Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern regions of Saudi Arabia. In total, 1,361 students responded to the questionnaire, 969 were males and 377 were females. Data was analyzed statistically using PASW to show the frequent use of the online resources for study purposes in both gender and to measure the impact of using web technologies on the relationship between lecturers and students. Open questions were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis approach.

Results

Figure (1) shows the use of online resources for study purposes. In general, the use of the internet for study purposes is low. The majority of students use websites for study purposes for less than 5 hours per month. However, this use of web technologies has impacted in their relationship with their lecturers in all categories, expert power, referent power, self-confidence, reliance and connectedness as shown in figure (2), detailed figure about each category is shown in appended A. Their relationship with their lecturer as he/she is a knowledge provider and role model has also been impacted.

![Average use of online resources for study purposes](image-url)

Figure 1 Average use of online resources for study purposes per month
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Expert power:
The majority of students who answered open questions believe that modern technology provides them with more organized and easy delivered data. They think that the need of a lecturer has started to decrease since knowledge has become easy access online. As a second reason, students feel that some lecturers information is not updated and not necessary applicable in modern life. This leads to say that students have become able to assess their lecturer’s knowledge.

Referent power:
Most student’s think that the lecturer has lost some of his/her power as a knowledge provider, however, the lecturer still has legitimate power which gives him/her ability to control the classroom and steer the education process.

Self-confidence and reliance:
Gaining knowledge from online resources gives students more self-confidence and dependence on themselves. Many students stated that they do not need to attend classes as they have access to truthful information at any time. Students who want to achieve high grades claim that you access online resources as a preparation for lecturer lectures or to confirm information that they have been provided in the classroom.

Connectedness:
Generally, most students prefer to use online methods to communicate with their lecturers, such as e-mails and e-learning tools and also the blackboard system and virtual class room. They...
feel that they feel more comfortable when they avoid face to face communication. However, on the other hand, they believe that the lecturers’ response is insufficient. E-mail as a communication channel with the lecturer is common; nevertheless students still feel that they still need to be formal in their messages with lecturers. The majority of students think that social networks such as Facebook and Twitter could make their relationship with lecturers closer.

Discussion

There are two points that can be concluded from this research paper. Firstly, current use of the online resources by students is insufficient to meet the requirements of e-learning. Students who used to be in a traditional mode of learning and have weak access to online technology will face difficulty to change suddenly to a modern method of learning (e-learning or distance learning). Web technology which is the backbone of e-learning should be involved in traditional education in order to make moving to an e-learning environment easier.

Secondly, this study clearly shows how the relationship between student and lecturer has been influenced by using modern methods of learning in the light of low use of web technologies. The gap that is expanding between students and lecturers due to the impact of e-learning should be controlled. Future use of e-learning would increase this gap between lecturers and students.

E-learning in Saudi Arabia has forced lecturers to change their traditional tasks (Seale, 2007). They are gradually changing their teaching method from being the lecturer-learner model into the lecturer-facilitator model. Both students and lecturers should be linked together regardless of the distance. Scholars from different regions recommend socialized student-lecturer relationships to reduce the impact of modern technologies (Zhan, 2006) (Chepchieng et al., 2006).
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References


ALQURASHI, F. eLearning in EFL: Problems and solutions.


Appendix

Appendix A: Figures of impact of student use of web technology on their relationship with their lecturers
**Impact on student–teacher expert power relationship**

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<thead>
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**Impact on student reference power relationship**

**Impact on student self-confidence**

**Impact on student reliance**

**Impact on student–teacher connectedness**