E-LEARNING PARTNERSHIP MODEL:
COLLABORATION AMONG ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS,
PRIVATE SECTOR, NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND
GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

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Title: E-learning Partnership Model: Collaboration among Academic Institutions, Private Sector, Non-Governmental and Governmental Institutions.

E-learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance. It offers to students the opportunity of accessibility and flexibility since it is independent of time and place.

E-learning is an excellent medium that helps in developing human resources. Lebanon has been known for its high quality of education due to its numerous reputable universities. Unfortunately e-learning in Lebanon is still far from the advanced stages achieved in the West.

The objective of this study is to present a partnership model where academic institutions, private sector, non-governmental and governmental institutions collaborate together to deliver e-learning degrees and online training courses.

The different sectors mentioned above can use the partnership model to work together for launching online courses. A sector can initiate alone online education, however it requires a lot of time, effort, and investments. Thus, it is better to establish a strategic alliance among those sectors.
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To My
Beloved Family
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background

E-learning is defined as the "acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance" (Distance Learning Association 2003). Traditional distance learning universities offer to students the opportunity of accessibility and flexibility issues. Learning through distance education is independent of time and place since face-to-face instruction is replaced by textbooks and other material (Nixon & Helms 1997).

E-learning can deploy a variety of delivery approaches. It can range from the books based correspondence courses, to lectures delivered through videotapes, to programs using new technologies. New technologies enable distance learning to use "telecommunications equipment to develop virtual classroom, joining students or employees at two or more remote locations". It includes non-interactive environment as well as interactive ones. In the non-interactive environments, students can only hear and see the lecturer. On the other hand, interactive environments enhance the interaction of students among each other from one side and with the lecturer from the other side. Employing interactive two-way audio and video provides the highest interaction of all methods and gives the most of learners satisfaction (Nixon & Helms 1997).

E-learning provides an opportunity of developing human resources. It offers several numbers of benefits at different levels. Most importantly, it delivers training and information by lowering costs for the students since it reduces to a great extent travel expenses, and classroom infrastructure. Although the startup costs are high, it can be
covered in a short period of time if deployed appropriately. Second, learners can access content anywhere and at any time. Third, e-learning has the potential to deliver the same content to all learners while being adjustable to meeting the specific needs of certain groups. Also, content can be easily upgraded and instantly distributed to everybody since it is web-enabled. Thus, upgrading and disseminating programs is quick and easy along with high scalability since it can be designed for 10 up to 100,000 participants. Moreover, e-learning enhances organizational responsiveness since it has the capability to reach high number of learners at the same time. In addition to this, it can be of great use in organizations especially in periods of fast changes (Zahran 2003).

It is known that digital divide exists between developed and developing countries and has several impacts on the respective societies. Arab countries are still far from the advanced stages achieved in the West concerning e-learning. As of today, only two virtual universities are established: the Arab Open University and the Syrian Virtual University, which are at their early stages. Concerning Lebanon, it has not achieved yet significant outcomes in that field.

**B. Purpose of the study**

The objective of this project is to develop an e-learning partnership model among Lebanese institutions of higher education (IHE), private sector, and government for providing online programs and engaging in e-learning activities.

**C. Study Approach**

Chapter two presents the concept and growth of e-learning, pros and cons of e-learning, strategies in e-learning, developing a virtual classroom, success factors in online education, organizational social responsibility, multi-sectors partnership in e-
learning, needs for such partnerships, and current examples.

Chapter three states the methodology selected in the project in addition to the research design, data collection tools, and data analysis techniques utilized.

Chapter four develops the partnership model and the content analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted for the model evaluation.

Chapter five discusses the results of the in-depth interviews and their impact on the suggested model. Accordingly, the model is adjusted taking into consideration the suggestions and comments of the interviewee.
CHAPTER II

E-LEARNING ISSUES, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND MULTI-SECTORS PARTNERSHIP

A. E-Learning Concept and Issues

E-learning represents the emerging frontier for the innovative delivery of higher education programs. The techniques of distance learning extend from traditional methods such as mail correspondence courses and off-site programs to new methods incorporating the use of technology such as interactive video, teleconferencing, internet, and e-mail. With the advancement of technology, off-site face-to-face instruction and mail correspondence have been excluded from current distance learning conception (Martin, Benoy, & Gross 2001).

E-learning consists of synchronous and asynchronous learning practices. Synchronous modes involve online, real-time instructor and student participation together with the integration of place-bounded classroom instruction. This has led to the delivery of online courses over the internet with the creation of chat rooms for interaction through interactive audio and video conferencing. On the other hand, asynchronous methods have released students from the chronological restrictions that exist in the synchronous learning. This is due to the existence of educational programs that can be accessed anytime and anywhere in the world. It includes audio and video taped in addition to web-based programs that learners can access, study, and interact at any time (Martin et al. 2001).

Distance learning expansion looks noticeable across a wide range of academic disciplines and training institutions. In 1999 around 1,500 academic institutions have been involved in offering courses through distance learning. The above-mentioned
number can be doubled if the numerous training programs of commercial entities are included (Martin et al. 2001).

1. Pros and Cons of Online Learning

As Taylor (2002, 24) referred to Alexander von Humboldt, a German philosopher in 1800s, said; “A language cannot be taught. One can only create conditions for learning to take place.” This statement is also appropriate to e-learning nowadays. When developing online learning systems, institutions must keep in mind to create an environment where learning can take place. Developing new online courses or converting a classroom course to an online one is much more complicated than just converting lectures to HTML documents. However, providing online education has more advantages than disadvantages. For this reason, developing online courses presents positive and negative aspects or pros and cons (Taylor 2002).

Online learning can be delivered in different forms. It may function as an add-on to traditional classroom, asynchronous, or synchronous class. The course developer / instructor is the one who must decide which form is the most appropriate for course delivery. Using online learning is excellent for academic courses and training programs that necessitate student memorization and using cognitive skills. However, distance learning is not very effective in programs that aim at changing students attitudes. These courses may deal in culture differences, behavioral training, among others. In addition to this kind of courses, only online programs are not sufficient for courses that need physical skills such auto mechanics or gaining knowledge in flying. This kind of learning calls for hands-on experience in order to have a successful course (Taylor 2002).

Creating an effective online course needs team effort. Traditional education
relied mostly on the instructor to develop the needed information with the help of school human resources who aided in photocopying, obtaining textbooks, and taking care of classrooms and equipments. Conversely, setting up an online course is much more difficult since it requires several advanced skills. If the instructor is not current on Web technologies, he will not be able to create a Web-based course in an effective way. According to Bryan Walbridge, CEO of 4th Power Web Inc. (Taylor 2002), a good web development team must include:

- Project leader: Exists as accountable for the project success; meeting the deadlines, budget, and achieving the objectives.
- Webmaster: Responsible for the website development and its maintenance.
- System administrator: Monitors the website and keeps it running, carries routine maintenance in order to have the online course available for students.
- Application developer: Develops the web pages of the course. The duties are to develop an attractive website by including instructional pages, assignments, style, color, etc.
- Graphic designer: In case the course necessitates a large graphic part, then the expertise of a graphic designer is needed.
- Subject matter expert: Usually it is the course instructor who decides on the course syllabus, ways of communication, assignments, assessments, etc.

From this perspective, online learning presents several advantages. First, it gives the opportunity for instructors to express themselves with their own style and characteristics through the website. Second, it offers to the team involved a chance on collaborating on producing effective online courses. This is due to the fact that the team will be proposing several recommendations that will improve the look and feel of online courses. Third, developing online courses is a rich experience for those involved since it
assists in developing the team member’s own knowledge. On the other hand, online learning provides different challenges to the team. The first limitation is the extensive creativity and knowledge demanded in online course formation. As mentioned above, online course website development needs several skills that sometimes are not available, thus when an instructor is working alone the outcome may not be up to the standard. Second, “using a team approach means being subject to the timetables and availability of the other team members. Be sure that the project leader will give your project the time and effort it requires and that it will not get shuffled in with a host of other project” (Taylor 2002).

2. Strategies in E-Learning

In the 1990s demand for e-learning has increased drastically, with the introduction of the internet. Several universities have already started providing distance learning programs through the internet. The new entrants into this market are traditional colleges and universities, virtual universities, and the private sector through corporate universities. Such institutions will be in a better position when formulating an overall strategy for distance learning programs by using strategic tools. “The strategic implications of the new methods of delivering education will undoubtedly create new opportunities, and introduce new obstacles for the traditional university” (Chan & Welebir 2003).

It is important to note that the internet permitted the entry of new competitors into the market without facing the typical barriers that traditional institutions faced upon establishment. Those competitors are building brand awareness and marketing themselves as alternatives to traditional colleges and universities. For this reason, “traditional institutions must address a number of issues related to the faculty who will
teach the online courses, as the e-teaching models are still under development and scrutiny (Chan & Welebir 2003).

According to Peter Drucker, since distance learning is not a passing trend, traditional universities have to change their strategy: virtual classroom will ultimately replace the traditional classroom. In order for educational institutions to take advantage of the internet capabilities that enhance higher education quality, they must initially understand how the internet is changing the education industry. “Internet gives every university an equal base for competition; however, it is noted that the substance (content) of online courses plays a major role in comparing different institutions. Using the Five Forces Model, developed by Michael Porter, to analyze the main competitive forces in the industry, we notice that the rivalry among competing institutions is the center with four potential competing forces applying pressure from all sides (Chan & Welebir 2003).

Understanding the five competitive forces affecting competition is key for developing an e-learning strategy for traditional universities. The main source of competition is the rivalry among competing institutions - either universities within the relatively close geographic area or universities with high brand image outside the geographic area. Since traditional universities are venturing into e-education, new entrants are creating further pressure. Such new entrants present the second source of competition for traditional universities. They are purely virtual education providers, such as University of Phoenix Online and Capella University. The third source of competition is coming from companies in other industries that are offering substitute products such as firms who integrated certification programs in their training and human resource development. In addition to this, there are different aspects of learning methods that may compete with e-learning programs. For instance campus branches,
correspondence studies, classes on audio-visual devices may be considered as substitutes to distance learning for some people. The fourth source of competition comes from students themselves whose increasing demand is intensifying competition specially that distance barriers do not exist anymore. Students have the ability to shop around for services that meet their desires from a growing number of education providers. The last competition source is the suppliers of resource inputs. They are the technology suppliers and the different delivery medium formats. Due to the widespread availability of the internet, it is giving every educational institution an equal base for competition. But it is important to take into account that the content of online courses is the major feature that plays a role when comparing different institutions. As a result of these forces and since education is experiencing rapid changes, traditional universities must decide how they will adapt (Chan & Welebir 2003).

The next step is to assess competitors’ strongest and weakest positions, and what will be their move in the future. Large established traditional universities with high reputation have a competitive advantage in attracting students for their online programs. Such schools can capitalize on the internet technology and take positions that are greater than expected considering their name recognition. Small schools with less recognized brand name may be at a disadvantage position when compared to the previous mentioned ones. Another advantage for traditional universities is accreditation. Accreditation is a sign of quality for online courses on which universities should emphasize (Chan & Welebir 2003).

On the other hand, educational institutions should try to anticipate their competitors’ future action plans and seek to provide comparable services. It is very important to know who are the main competitors in the industry when setting a competitive strategy in order to be the most effective. Several new virtual education
providers have captured a market share and are able to be recognized. Therefore, traditional universities must evaluate the key elements it will bring to the market. Administrators have to focus on competitive success factors for their institutions. Institutions of higher education have to evaluate their resources and competitive capabilities that will determine its competence in providing e-learning programs. In addition to this, universities must assess the skills of their faculty. Some professors may not have the adequate expertise in developing online courses due to lack of information technology use in education. The assessment will enable the university to provide the required training to overpass this drawback. Parallel to this, the university is advised to perform a SWOT analysis. This tool will enable to diagnose and assess the future trends of e-learning. The last level is to carry out outcomes assessment. The main outcomes of higher educational institutions are: teaching by transmitting knowledge, research by developing new knowledge, and services by applying knowledge. The performance measurement of universities will enable them to evaluate their outcome and have a proper feedback (Chan & Welebir 2003).

3. Developing a Virtual Classroom

As universities enrollment is increasing and campuses resources are deteriorating, e-learning programs can be regarded as a mean for expansion into new markets. The cooperation between universities and businesses in providing distance learning education is also an opportunity to new markets. Universities can collaborate between each other with businesses to provide online programs and continuing professional development. In this way, institution of higher education will take advantage from more students at remote sites and companies will be able to train more employees at distant locations at lower costs (Nixon & Helms 1997).
E-learning can take different forms, as discussed before, such as: non-interactive environment or interactive environment. In a non-interactive environment students can only listen to the lecturer but without interacting with each other. It may include different variations, for example video and audio payback tapes and one-way communication. On the other hand, interactive environments are more acceptable and extend the learning and interaction process. In this environment, interactive two-way audio and video with real time course offer the greatest interaction and participants satisfaction (Nixon & Helms 1997).

In an interactive environment, the students are at two or more distant locations connected by satellite. They can see each other on an individual or small group basis, and have synchronized discussion through desk microphones and cameras. Usually, the lecturer introduces a certain topic for discussion, then participants are encouraged to ask questions, be involved in case projects, and add comments. The interaction and involvement of students during class sessions is very important for the learning process due to their actively participation (Nixon & Helms 1997).

University of Tennessee started providing programs through e-learning. The development of distance learning had an impact on different levels within the university. First, the faculty members were exposed to online learning techniques and technology in the classroom. As a new system is in place, instructors had to alter the learning method by challenging students for more creative thinking and work in teams. As a direct result to this, “cases became the primary focus as cases have been found to teach students to think independently, rather than solely absorbing lecture material that may be quickly forgotten” (Nixon & Helms 1997).

Besides this, University of Tennessee had to equip itself for the proper tools of the virtual classroom that assist in the critical thinking instruction pedagogy. First, the
existence of a speaker phone that is indispensable for group-to-group interaction and mixed-site groups. Through the speaker phone, students will be able to communicate ideas, discuss, and interact with each other. Second, a fax machine is imperative for quick feedback on homework and a mean to give quizzes. Third, the telephone is important for progress consultation, grades, and questions on individual basis. Fourth, a copy machine is beneficial for quickly reproduction of handouts and allows the instructor the flexibility to fax recent articles and case updates the last minute. Fifth, computer terminals are used for testing purposes, case exams, business simulations, etc. The instructor can reply to messages, e-mail tests, and provide feedback on cases, for students to learn more and at a faster pace. Sixth, an overhead camera allows the lecturer to show case manual solutions or original articles without the need of converting documents to transparencies. Finally, a video player is useful for absentees; thus, the lecturer can tape classes for them so that material covered is not missed (Nixon & Helms 1997).

In distance learning, adapting the interactive environment the instructor has to deal with students in a different way than a traditional class. They should “work to make time for each participant individually, both during class, and outside a class on the phone or by E-mail.” Office hours are kept in order to have an exact time to reach the faculty. In addition to this, home phone number, e-mail address, and fax number are urged to be given to students for ease of communication (Nixon & Helms 1997).

“Using the techniques described above, a case study approach in a distance environment is almost identical to the traditional format.” Students prepare the case outside classroom and later engage in class discussion. Having mixed-site groups is feasible by creating rooms on the web for group member meeting. In this way, members do not hear other groups’ discussions and then all groups get together (Nixon & Helms
4. **Critical Success Factors in Online Education**

E-learning offers great excitement for high education institutions since it can reach new audiences and provide the opportunity to transform learning delivery and the competitive edge. Academic institutions are integrating distance learning within their programs for different reasons (Volery & Lord 2000):

- First, they can expand access to education to meet the increasing demands of education for state residents and companies, and to educate under-served populations. Traditional institutions are not convenient for many people since tight calendar programs have not matched work and family responsibilities.

- Second, distance learning alleviates the capacity constraints of academic institutions. Having increasing pressure on universities to increase their capacities, online learning is an excellent way to leverage scalability without overwhelming their bricks and mortar capacities.

- Third, online learning meets the public needs for lifelong learning which will increase the demand for higher education of people not within the traditional 18 – 24 age range. This new demand is more profitable for the institutions than the traditional markets and will generate more revenue.

- Fourth, it serves as a transformation mechanism for higher education institutions. With decreasing public fund to universities, there is a challenge to adapt quickly to an increasing competitive advantage.

As technology is accessible in a friendly user way, universities that do not adopt e-learning will be left behind in the race for globalization and technological development. In fact, if universities are going to continue in the implementation of
conventional models as those of the traditional classroom or passive distance education, slight improvement may be expected with escalating costs. For this reason, the critical success factors are essential for universities in delivering effective e-learning programs (Volery & Lord 2000).

Several studies conducted by Dillon and Gunawardena (1995) and Leidner and Jarvenpaa (1993), identified three main variables affecting the effectiveness of online delivery (Volery & Lord 2000):

- First, technology factor plays a vital role. The network setup must be designed to allow students synchronous and asynchronous exchange, convenient access, with minimal time for document exchange. In addition to this, the quality of the interface plays an important role: “the interface design for online delivery ranges from the highly artistic to highly technical”. Different important dimensions are taken into consideration that are ease of use, navigation, cognitive load, mapping, screen design, information presentation, aesthetics, and overall functionality. An outstanding medium is one that permits for both synchronous and asynchronous communication and several didactical elements like text, graphics, audio, and video messages. Interactivity is one of the most important aspects of medium richness in a web environment as it enhances the capability to provide rapid interaction and feedback to students.

- The second variable is the instructor characteristics. The instructor plays an essential role in effective online learning. “It is not the technology, but the instructional implementation of the technology that determines effects on learning.” According to Webster and Hackley, three instructor characteristics affect learning outcomes. First, the instructor attitude towards technology plays a fundamental role in learning outcome. Students registered in a class where the instructor has a positive approach toward technology in learning environments are most probable to experience more positive
learning outcomes. Second, it depends on the instructor teaching style. Usually in distance education programs, students feel isolation due to the lack of class interaction. In order to overcome this, lecturers have to set office hours and different methods of contact. On the other hand, they should display interactive teaching techniques, promote interaction among students and with class instructor. Third, it requires some control of the technology by the instructor. This is due to the fact that in online learning, students sometime face technical problems. It is vital for instructors to have some control of the technology and be able to solve some technical problems when they arise.

- The third and final variable is the student characteristics. Different characteristics of students play an important role in the distance education. “As maintained by Colley et al. (1994), such variables as prior experience, having a computer at home, and personality produce gender differences towards computers.” It has been noticed that computer usage was dominated by males in the 21 countries surveyed; thus, computer experience may be a variable that has an interaction with gender. Thus, students that lack the basic computer skills and self-discipline may achieve better results in traditional delivery mode.

**B. Social Responsibility**

The notion of social responsibility suggests that a private corporation has responsibilities to society that extend beyond making a profit. Different points of view exist concerning the responsibility of business organizations to society. According to Hunger and Wheelen, Milton Friedman views the concept of social responsibility differently. According to him, engaging in social responsible activities is spending the shareholder’s money for general social concern. Even if the shareholders give permission to engage in such efforts, in the long run it will be harmful for the society.
This is due to the fact that the organization will be moving from the economic incentives that will lead to inefficiency, and the negative impact will be born by the society (Wheelen & Hunger 2002).

On the other hand, Archie Carroll perceives the subject from a different angle. Setting the stage for much of our research is the seminal work of Carroll (1979) which provides comprehensive three-dimensional conceptual framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The one dimension of particular concern in this study pertains to his four-part definitional framework of social responsibility. Although Carroll is one among many who have made an effort to define CSR and identify the elements of this elusive construct, his definitional framework is particularly useful in facilitating empirical research. Carroll's four components, namely those pertaining to "economic," "legal," "ethical," and "discretionary" obligations essentially outline the various responsibilities organizations have. Moreover, Aupperle, Carroll, and Hatfield (1985) found Carroll's four-part definitional framework to possess construct validity. As a result, Carroll provides theoretical logic underlying much of the empirical CSR research. A business's economic responsibility refers to the traditional function of business as a product/service and profit producer, and is considered the most important obligation of an organization. Its legal responsibility consists of following governmental rules and regulations. This reflects a view of "codified ethics" and coexists with the economic dimensions as a fundamental precept of the free enterprise system. On the other hand, the ethical responsibilities of a business are those societal-defined expectations of business behavior that are not part of formal law. They include actions that go beyond strictly basic legalities, and pertain to actions, which are determined as "fair", and "moral." Finally, the discretionary responsibilities are purely voluntary and often philanthropic. They are actions that respond to society's expectation of corporate
citizenry (Carroll, 1979; 1991). Using Carroll's CSR construct permits inquiry into whether the four separate components are weighted or valued as was originally proposed by Carroll where his graphic representation suggested a proportional weighting of 4-3-2-1, for the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary components, respectively. The above-stated approach also allows researchers to compare and contrast the social orientation of managers in public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations (Martin, Meyer, & Aupperle 2000).

Organizations that are identified as being social responsible get some advantage that may be a source of competitive advantage (Wheelen & Hunger 2002). Examples of benefits obtained by having societal concerns are numerous:

- enable the institution to charge higher prices and acquire brand loyalty
- build enduring relationships with clients and suppliers due to trustworthiness.
- employ outstanding employees who have a preference for working with responsible firm
- take advantage of the goodwill developed in difficult times.
- perceived as reputable companies for investors that desire long term investments

1. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)/Organizational Social Responsibility (OSR)

When studying the historical evolution of the social contract between organizations and society, it is reasonable to expect that an organization's strategic management orientation is influenced by its social obligations. When considering community interests, the CEO functions as a key actor in shaping the strategy and its organizational social responsibility (OSR). Known in the private sector as corporate
social responsibility (CSR), OSR applies to all entities and embodies their economic and social orientation. Simply stated, underlying the mission exists four components of organizational social responsibilities (i.e., economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary). While the strategist leads the organization in fulfilling its mission, various stakeholders place demands on the institution. Such diverse demands shape the organization's mission (Martin et al. 2000).

2. Academic Social Responsibility

The institutions of higher education (IHE) strategies are shaped by their missions. Most traditional academic institutions are not required to make a profit, similar to the private sector organizations, but they have to comply with economic obligations as stated in the regulations. On the other hand, the public demands from the IHE, specially the public colleges and universities, to deliver services to the community. As the profit incentive is not the main driver affecting the academic mission statement and there is an expected service delivery, the concept of stockholder is replaced by the stakeholder notion (Martin 1992).

The stakeholder notion combines economic, political, and social interests. It can be defined as comprising all groups in the society who have a major stake or interest in the institution. Each one of these groups tries to evaluate the organization according to their self-interest. In addition to this, the interest of stakeholders may have a significant effect on the organization. Consequently, executives of the institution must understand the interests of different stakeholders, stress applied, and standards used (Martin 1992).

Institution of higher education presidents consider their organizations as multipurpose entities satisfying diverse social obligations while taking into account the
different stakeholder interests. Indeed, trustworthy sources emphasize on the importance of the academic mission statement reflecting its social responsibilities. Carnegie Commission on Higher Education identified five fundamental objectives that seem to support academic social responsibility (Martin 1992):

- Improvement of human capability in society at large.
- Expanding educational justice for the postsecondary age group.
- Performing critical evaluation of the society for the purpose of society’s self renewal.
- Ensure the adequate environment for the intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and skill development of students.
- Transmission of learning and wisdom.

C. Multi-Sectors Partnerships in E-Learning

The concept of a partnership involves the development of cooperative relations with other organization. Most of the time partnerships and strategic alliances are used by organizations to enhance their capacity to serve clients and/or obtain resources while keeping their own identity. For instance services can be outsourced and then provided more efficiently through the cooperation with other organizations than if they were done alone. Strategic alliances and partnerships are becoming commonplace among not-for-profit organizations (Wheelen & Hunger 2002).

Higher education playing field has become increasingly congested and muddy. At the same time as probable developments in the domain are evident, there exist problems and challenges. It is very clear that distance learning technologies, mainly the internet, have altered the way education will be consumed in the future. An increasing number of educators have understood the huge potential of e-learning for educational
purposes and the probable changes that may widespread adoption of new tools and techniques. “A major part of this trend involves the establishment of innovative multi-sectoral partnerships wherein each collaborator contributes from its own comparative advantage and reaps its own unique rewards”. It is known that higher education in developing countries is facing chronicle problems such as: under funding, unqualified faculty who lack motivation, underdeveloped curricula, etc. The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Human development report 2001 mentioned that the fundamental basics of higher education have expanded a lot. A new challenge arose as to “teach students not just what is currently known but also to keep their knowledge up to date, so that they will be able to refresh their skills as the economic environment changes” (UNDP 2001). Nowadays there is a belief that continuing education prospects are an integral part of higher education. As the report identifies several critical problems, it advances a set of serious solutions and corrective mechanisms. Besides improving management and curriculum in general, specific recommendations were suggested emphasizing on different aspects (Raab, Ellis, & Abdon 2001):

- First, setting clear priorities for investments in higher education. The major problematic issue that faces developing countries is the cost of implementing the reforms needed. With limited budgets and the existence of several urging needs, developing countries have to define a set of priorities and make difficult choices for sectors in which to invest. Public financing should be targeted to priority field that engender large spillover for the society such as: science, public health, agriculture, and other fields related to technological inventions. The most important factor to focus on is educational reform by performing curricular revisions (Raab et al. 2001).

- Second, increase information application and communication technologies in education. The development in communications has changed society. The invention of
telephone, television, and fax machines pushed outward the ability to store and transmit knowledge. With the convergence of computers and telecommunications, it became possible to transmit vast amounts of information anywhere in the world within seconds at very low cost. As a result, the new technology helped in the acquisition and absorption of knowledge as well as giving developing countries the chance to improve their educational systems by forming and executing new policies and widening business opportunities. Today, there is a worldwide recognition that information and telecommunication technologies offer great opportunities and challenges for higher education. It presents the tools that are required for providing formal training and continuing education. One of the most important outcomes of the new technologies application is the emergence of e-learning. It is distinguished by the speed, technological transformation, and mediated human interactions. It has been reported that higher education institutions that are offering e-learning programs have tripled their internet-based technologies from 22% to 60% in 1998, and are expected to continue in this trend (Raab et al. 2001).

It has been noted that distance learning offers huge benefits, since “e-learning matches the needs of nontraditional students, increases the educational facilities available to traditional students, provides companies with cost efficient training options, and gives students and researchers in developing nations an invaluable means of gaining a first-world education tempered by third-world experience”. However, developing countries are still far behind the progress achieved in developed countries. Despite the fact that several universities in developing countries are testing and implementing e-learning systems, there are obstacles limiting their progress. The major obstacles are costs, lack of access to information, training, infrastructure, and resources. Most of the educational institutions in developing countries have limited opportunities to evaluate
and implement e-learning programs. In order to overcome this drawback, multi-sectors partnerships is the ideal choice that offers a cost effective and efficient way to address such constraints (Raab et al. 2001).

1. Needs for E-Learning Partnerships

New kinds of public and private partnerships are required for realizing the promises of e-learning. Lately, educational institutions and business corporations have collaborated more than before, and much work waits to be done in partnership. “An immense opportunity exists for institutions to establish new forms of electronic-based collaboration – from the student level to the institutional level - that can bring major improvements in both access and learning while meeting legitimate public and institutional concepts about cost and quality. Collaborating institutions can deliver modules, courses, and degrees to individuals and groups of learners who interact with faculty and with organized learning materials in both real-time and delayed-time (asynchronous) modes”. Several causes are forcing the move to partnerships among different sectors such as: growing consumer power, high initial investments, and the evolving societal needs (Raab et al. 2001).

First, as a result of the widespread of ICT application in education, it is not longer for traditional educational institutions to depend on “captive” learners. This is due to the fact that it is possible for education to surpass space, time, and political boundaries. Further to this trend, there is the increase in demand for advanced and continuing education. It is estimated that the number of internet users grew from 97 million in 1998 to 320 million in 2002, thus the online training industry is expected to double every year, attaining $11.5 billion in 2003. From this we can conclude that such developments means more competition for students who have the ability to choose from
a vast number of nontraditional educational suppliers with the skills and attitudes required to succeed in the new educational marketplace. Thus, “e-learning is poised to catalyze both competitive and collaborative relationships among for-profit firms and not for-profit colleges and universities” (Raab et al. 2001).

Second, establishing online programs requires huge amounts of investments. It is not only limited to the initial and continuing upgrading of hardware, software, and connectivity but also for the human resource needed for keeping it up and updating it. In addition to this, cost of users training and developing applications for the efficient use of infrastructure must be added to the investment calculation. Partnerships present attractive cost reduction for individual institutions that struggle to do it all alone. In a partnership each partner will focus on specific areas in which it has a competitive advantage. In this way, services will be provided to multiple associates at competitive fees. Since e-learning requires different instructional elements like content development, course delivery, testing and evaluation, and administrative functions, it is uniquely suited for the cooperation of multiple entities in its delivery. Initially, individual traditional institutions used to perform all these services for every area in which it provided instructional elements. E-learning simplify the segregation of supplying these different services, so that institutions can focus on the elements it excels in and outsource others (Raab et al. 2001).

Third, nowadays the new global knowledge economy is characterized by the need for highly trained workforce. Higher education has been criticized for failing in producing graduates with the skills needed for the workplace. This is due to the fact that university faculties and business leaders seldom discuss about a set of skills and directions that are a must for successful employment. As a consequence to this, the private sector had established and greatly invested in corporate universities in order to
train their employees with the adequate courses. “It is maintained that partnerships rather than such individual efforts are preferred answer, and many organizations are beginning to realize the benefits partnerships can bring. In fact, the corporate university has encouraged higher education and business to rethink their existing relationships” (Raab et al. 2001).

People involved in this subject have recognized the benefits of public and private sector collaboration and the probable synergies and efficiencies. The most common scenario of e-learning partnership model is traditional universities supply the intellectual capital, content, support, student evaluation, awards, etc. On the other hand, agents equip hardware and software applications, website and communication for maintenance, technical support for courseware development, etc. Alternatively, corporations provide financial resources, communicate educational needs, and turn into a main consumer of educational opportunities (Raab et al. 2001).

2. Examples of Multi-Sectors Partnerships in E-Learning

a. APRTC Institute

Since farmers in Asia were facing increasing challenges to raise the level of production, compete in a harsh global economy, and have profitable operations, APRTC was established in order to promote sustainable agricultural practices. Agricultural professionals in different sectors as: government, non-government, and industry were the center point for bridging the vast gap between the innovative agricultural technology options and current agriculture practices in Asia. For this reason, the multi-sectors-private, public, government, and academic - decided that the best action for this challenge is to offer educational program utilizing new information and communication technologies (Raab et al. 2001).
The proposed solution would provide powerful tools enhancing education for the targeted group and creating effective agents of change. As a result of these thoughts, private sector raised fund to launch and operate APRTC and its distance learning program. The aim was that the institute would be independent, not-for-profit educational center able to educate agriculture experts in the region. As the center was initiated in 2001, it has developed and delivered online courses associated with agriculture. The courses that were offered or are under development are:

- Digital Literacy for Agriculture Professionals,
- English for agriculture,
- Safe and Effective Use of Crop Protection Products,
- Introduction to Integrated Pest Management, and
- IPM for cotton, for Irrigated Rice, for Vegetables

Besides developing and delivering distance education courses, APRTC endeavor has been directed on creating new multi-sectors partnerships. Such new collaborations were established with NGO World-View International Foundation, Asia Pacific Crop Protection Association, and wide range of leading academic institutions in Asia Pacific region and the West. The motivation behind the partners interest in succeeding in this partnership are numerous. First, academic institutions will possess new materials and specific expertise in new areas gained through the partnerships that will enhance its current teaching position. Moreover, universities will benefit from access to the cost-effective design, hosting, and delivery system made available by the partnership. On the other hand, the private sector will get a better-trained workforce and the accessibility to a continuing education of good quality. The government and NGO will recognize the partnership as a mean to a unique opportunity to reach a wider constituency and better fulfill their mission (Raab et al. 2001).
b. Minnesota Virtual University

Minnesota state higher education planning report stated that academic institutions, both public and private, should perceive themselves as “brokers of educational services, rather than as competitors fighting for enrollment and public funds, and they need to work cooperatively to provide affordable services”. People expect educational organizations to partner in providing high quality, reasonably priced, appropriate, flexible, and focused degrees that are adequate for immediate and long-term educational needs. This can be accomplished by leveraging resources through the development of joint systems and services (Duin & Baer 2000).

The idea was initiated to “build a virtual university by developing a statewide partnership among private colleges, state departments, industry representatives, and community organizations”. Task teams formed by faculty, administrators, staff, and professionals from the industry, community groups, and government agencies can collaborate altogether in different areas such as: faculty and staff training, professional development, marketing, and distance education resource development. According to his analysis of California State University, Stephen Downes noticed that joint ventures are essential since reduce the costs and enhance usage, but they “do not work unless the institutions work together, sacrificing apparent short-term gain for future returns”. In this way companies, communities, and students can suggest their educational needs and preferred ways of delivery (Duin & Baer 2000).

c. VCampus

VCampus has a vast experience in partnering with academic institutions. It has been in the field of online distance training and education environment for some time. It started as an electronic publishing and a product focus then moved to combined
technology and service company. Its mission is to ensure a quality learning setting that allows an academic partner to turn into a dominant online education provider. From the beginning, the focus was on both corporate and academic markets. The main duty of VCampus is to manage all the details of the software and hardware for distance learning delivery, like securing server facilities, providing the learning environment, and administering the help desk. The institutions that have a partnership with VCampus, will have their own personalized virtual campuses (Dees Stallings 2001).

d. NextEd

NextEd is a training and learning company that partners with academic institutions and other educational institutions to provide courses over the internet to the Asian market. The main financial contributor to this partnership is Hong Kong that set the technology infrastructure platforms in six countries. Educational institutions are established in the six countries for the delivery of accredited online courses for the workforce training and professional education (Clarke & Hermens 2001).

e. Pearson Learning Network

Pearson is one of the most reputable media companies in the world. As it is based in the UK, it had undertaken several strategic alliances in order to expand its market through online education. Since it is a curriculum material provider in print, electronic, and online formats, it has a strategy to deliver a full range of accredited courses in collaboration with business schools and professional bodies. The network is formed of four integrated networks to assist the different learner markets. The learner markets are: higher education, professional development, lifelong education, and schools. The revenue is generated by subscriptions, sponsorships, advertising and
product sales. The partnership characteristic is that it shares common technology and marketing (Clarke & Hermens 2001).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Problem Definition

E-learning offers the opportunity to develop the Lebanese human resource capital. It helps academic institutions in expanding their reach of new students especially those in the rural areas. On the other hand, it offers low cost training courses to professionals as it reduces to a great extent the related expenses for acquiring such learning. This is due to the fact that the travel expenses, classroom infrastructure costs, and course content adjustment costs can be minimized a lot (Zahran 2003).

For academic institutions alone to initiate e-learning programs is very difficult and costly. Our goal in this study is to develop a partnership model where the academic institutions together with the private sector and government start providing e-learning degrees and training courses (Raab et al. 2001).

B. Data Collection

Since building a distance learning partnership among institutions: academic, private sector, and government for delivering e-learning programs is relatively a new event in Lebanon, the exploratory research methodology appears to be the appropriate one (Zikmund 2000). Such a methodology necessitates intensive interviews or long discussions with eligible persons that may provide an understanding of a complex situation. The type to be used in the extensive qualitative interviews is face-to-face. Mainly the two types of interviews to be utilized are: structured and unstructured interview (Denzin & Lincoln 2000).
This exploratory research incorporates both primary and secondary data analysis and case study methods (Zikmund 2000). The different partnerships among the multi-sectors are examined and evaluated thoroughly. The interviews conducted aimed at collecting data from specialized persons in the e-learning field. Most of the participants can be considered as key individuals in the organizations where they work. The data collected from the interviewees is analyzed in order to get the information which will be used in our attempt for the e-learning partnership model development.

Subsequent to the literature review, a partnership model is developed by using the logical partitioning method (Zikmund 2000). The literature review provided a solid background for the model development. Several current partnerships were examined in chapter two and the relationship of the different sectors and their roles were analyzed before proposing our model. Out model consists of different collaborating players who are: academic institutions, private sector, and government. The responsibility of each participant in the model is identified by dedicating a specific role for each one.

1. Interviewing Method

The interviewees were contacted ahead of time. The same e-mail was sent to the various participants requesting them to assign a date for the interview. Upon choosing the different interviewees, they were selected in a way to represent all the sectors mentioned in the model. Thus, they were chosen from academic institutions, hardware and software companies, banks, and ministries.

Face to face interviews were utilized to gather information from professionals. Before conducting the interviews, a pre-testing interview was done. The purpose of this interview was to verify that the questions to be asked were comprehensive, followed a logical pattern, and achieved the intended results. The interview questions were
prepared ahead of time and e-mailed to the interviewees prior to the meeting together with an executive summary of the partnership model and a flowchart. The executive summary presented the different collaborating sectors in the partnership, its needs and benefits. On the other hand, the flowchart depicted the same information but in a graphical presentation, and showed the outcome of the partnership. The purpose of e-mailing the interview questions, executive summary, and flowchart is to have the person interviewed feel at ease, prepared for providing good answers, and confident about the interview purposes. The interviews were recorded on a cassette recorder after obtaining a verbal permission at the beginning of each meeting from the interviewees. The anticipated duration of each interview ranged between forty-five minutes and one hour. The different interviews conducted were enough to collect information regarding building our e-learning partnership model.

C. Analysis

After completing the interviews, data obtained is analyzed thoroughly. Each interview is considered first alone, important issues are highlighted, and a summary of findings is done. The next step is to verify if common concerns and issues were stated by interviewees from the same sector, and whether there is harmony among the different sectors on how to collaborate with each other. The interview content analysis is used to assess the responses of structured and unstructured interviews. The final step is to revise the model proposed in light of the comments and issues raised in the interviews. At the end of this project, the model is adjusted to comply with the results of the study, and a set of recommendations is delivered.
CHAPTER IV

MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

A. Proposed Model

The research partnership model presents a solid commitment to the e-learning project. The partners involved in this strategic alliance are academic institutions, private sector, and government. The most important characteristics of organizations in the future are their ability to develop, maintain, and gain from collaborative strategic alliances. The private sector involvement in public issues is not new since it has been engaged in different public service projects such as water and transport. At one or another point in time, these institutions have interacted together. However, the contribution of the private sector in social areas as education and e-learning is a recent topic (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

The academic institutions play the role of knowledge provider. The main key activities of these institutions are: academic content, curriculum design, student assessment, faculty training, organizational and individual assessment, and provider of low cost highly trained personnel such as graduate assistants.

The private sector participates in the partnership as provider of resources. Its main role is to set the information technology infrastructure, identify their needed training courses, contribute in the capital of the partnership, share experience obtained from their corporate universities abroad. Finally, the government role in the partnership is to arrange the legal status of the institution created, and assist in the accreditation of the programs at the ministry of higher education. On the other hand, it plays another role by being a major client to the partnership programs.
Fig. 1. Proposed Model

Partnership outcome:
- E-learning degrees
- Low-cost training courses to private sector
- High quality training courses and workshops to public personnel

E-learning Partnership

Academic institutions

Knowledge provider:
- Academic content
- Curriculum design
- Student assessment
- Faculty training
- Organizational & individual assessment
- Low cost trained personnel

Private sector

Resource provider:
- IT infrastructure
- Capital fund
- Identify training courses needed
- Share experience from their corporate universities

Government

Legal and recipient provider:
- Legal status
- Program accreditation
- Program recipient
1. Partnership Need

Apparently from the primary data, secondary data, and interviews with participants, having such an e-learning partnership is new of its kind in Lebanon. It is the first time that academic institutions, private sector, and government collaborate together to deliver e-learning degrees and training courses. The region is starting to experience different levels of e-learning development such as the Arab Open University and other initiatives (Zahran 2003). The literature review suggests that this partnership appears as development for Lebanon and the Middle East. It requires a lot of experience in order to be a success. For an academic institution to initiate e-learning alone is very difficult and complicated. It necessitates various disciplines to team up for a better distance education delivery; thus, there is a need for the partnership:

- Implement faculty involvement requiring their training on content development, course delivery and administration, student assessment (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

- Set the information technology infrastructure since it is one of the basic requirements for online education (Reisman, Dear, & Edge 2001).

- Acquire the needed fund for the establishment of the e-learning institution project and the financing of the ongoing expenditures (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

- Study the corporation needs for online training.

- Conform to the legal aspect of higher education in Lebanon and file for the accreditation of programs delivered at the ministry of higher education.

2. Partnership Strengths

The partnership in e-learning between the academic institutions, private, and the public sectors presents several strengths on different levels:
• Facilitate the access to private capital in order to finance the project. One of the main functions of the private sector in this partnership is to provide capital (LaRocque & Latham 2003). The capital will be mostly used for the funding of the establishment costs, technology infrastructure, and ongoing operations expenditures. With the difficult economic situation in Lebanon, the Lebanese government may not be willing to finance such an arrangement. Thus, having the private sector as a partner is beneficial on the financing level.

• Introduce the private sector skills and innovations by delivering services such as maintenance, infrastructure upgrading, staff training, etc. It is known that often in education the technical and management skills are lacking. In this way, the private sector fills the gap by supplying these concerns (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

• Enable the different parties to share the risk adequately. Each partner identifies the areas that are best handled by, thus the risk is properly allocated. Numerous examples exist concerning e-learning projects that were a failure due to lack of partners sharing risks according to their area of expertise (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

• Allow the partners involved in the e-learning venture to focus on their areas of core activities. In this way, academic institutions concentrate on content development, research, faculty training instead of spending their efforts on ICT installation and maintenance (Reisman et al. 2001).

• Necessitate a much longer relationship between the players. This has a direct positive effect by having the private sector supply better e-learning infrastructure since it will be responsible for the maintenance over a long period of time (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

• Induce the three different sectors to take a longer-term view of their
decisions. The different partners are signing long-term contract partnerships, thus have to articulate their long-term plan and vision for the collaboration. In this way, there is a cross-jurisdictional collaboration and knowledge sharing by getting around political and jurisdictional rigidity (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

- Set expectation for the partnership to allow for a lot of innovation in the education delivery due to the concentration on the output and outcome desired from the joint venture. Since it is multi-sectors collaboration, partners objectives are not on how to achieve the outcome, but on the quality of output provided (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

3. Partnership Risks

It is known that when different parties collaborate together for a specific purpose or objective to achieve, several risks are present that may affect the performance and the future of the partnership:

- Not acquainted with e-learning concept, the student body in Lebanon may find it strange. A high percentage of students prefer the traditional university than the distance learning course delivery. This presents a serious concern for the project viability.

- Realize at this time that the Lebanese market is saturated by universities and training centers. This may cause a weak enrollment of scholars, thus financial problems and a going concern issue.

- Understand the clash of organizations values. One of the most frequent criticism of university and business partnerships is the clash between academic values and business values. Most of the academic institutions do not care for making profits, but for the quality of education provided, the excellence of their researches, and
dissemination of general principles. On the other hand, the private sector focuses on earnings profits and increasing their market share. This may lead to different point of views and some misunderstanding (Bowie 1994).

- Unequipped faculty for providing e-learning courses. In case the instructors and professors did not have the adequate training on online education delivery, the outcome result may not be of good quality, therefore jeopardizing the reputation of the institution (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

- Unsatisfied private sector by the quality of the training courses delivered to its employees or believe that it is more profitable to produce their own training courses instead of being engaged in the partnership, causing the withdrawal of several corporations leading to its termination.

- One of the characteristics of the private sector is their low perception of partnerships. It may be argued that a partnership is a sign of weakness by one or several parties involved in the project. Thus, the concept of collaboration may not be accepted or fail to achieve its main objectives.

4. Partnership Benefits

The partnership offers a number of potential benefits to numerous parties involved and interested in online learning such as: students, faculties, private companies, public servants, government, and communities. The most important advantages of the partnership model are:

- It creates a sort of education-industry link as businesses are collaborating with academics. This will help in identifying the private sector needs from academic institutions concerning education delivered to students (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

- The partnership model is designed as a mean of collaboration among
different sectors to focus on the development of e-learning programs and training courses. Such partnership models may lead in the future to full-scale implementation covering new areas in education and research (LaRocque & Latham 2003).

- The partnership can be described as an outsourcing of management and services procedures (LaRocque & Latham 2003). This is due to the fact that each sector is contributing in domains representing their competitive advantages, and not tackling every area in the electronic education process. For example, private sector may be responsible for the supply and maintenance of ICT hardware / software, while faculties are the one to handle content development and delivery.

- It gives access to private funding by corporations and foundations who realize that partnering in this project is beneficial (LaRocque & Latham 2003). Most of the required fund will be supplied by the private sector, thus government and academic institutions will not be affected by liquidity consumption.

- Since several academic institutions are partnering in this project, the main benefit is that redundancy is reduced to a great extent. This is due to the fact that the resources are used in a better way, more efficiently and effectively (A. H. Duin, Baer, & Starke-Meyerring 2001). Instead of each university acquiring the same databases and incurring similar costs, the work can be divided in such a way there is a better use of resources.

- The main benefit for the private sector is the training courses that will be delivered by the partnership. The main characteristic of these courses is their low cost since several companies will be using the same training course for their employees with minor adjustments.

- On the other hand, the project is beneficial for the government sector by providing high quality training and workshops. The government personnel training
needs will be closely examined in order to provide the adequate instruction and workshops to the employees belonging to different ranks. Thus, the public workforce will be better trained to perform their jobs which will have a direct positive impact on the whole economy.

**B. Interviews Interpretation**

Structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with six respondents representing different sectors in the partnership. After carrying out the interviews, the answers were tabulated using the copy and paste method (Wilson 2003). The answers for each question have been analyzed carefully; attempting to find patterns across different sectors and contradictions. The content analysis, for each question, revealed the following results:

**1. Success Factors and Barriers**

Several success factors were mentioned by the interviewees. The respondent from the academic institution suggested creating the right environment in which the technology is able to work. E-learning does not require only information technology infrastructure, but also other devices such as video conferencing tools, fax, international telephone lines in order to create the adequate environment for knowledge dissemination. On the other hand, one of the private sector respondents believed that getting the different sectors actively involved represents a success factor. All partners have to be convinced about the partnership benefits. When all the parties believe that it is for their own advantage to collaborate together, the outcome will be enhanced. In addition to this, a respondent from the private sector emphasized on identifying common areas where different sectors can cooperate together. Recognizing the right
areas of collaboration for each partner represents a success factor as disagreement will be much less and each one providing its competitive advantage. Moreover, a respondent from the private sector suggested that the partnership entity remains politically neutral. It is very difficult not to be politically neutral in an educational project as if some groups are satisfied others will be disappointed, which may create some problems on different levels. On the other hand, the government respondent emphasized on Lebanon richness in paper-based content and human capital. The high quality of human capital is capable in initiating e-learning successfully without significant trouble. Besides this, the availability of paper-based content in abundance makes the content development easier. Thus, the presence of content and human capital represents a success factor.

Alternatively, the international agency respondent stressed on the fact that there are communication channels among the different partners. Previous projects, not related to e-learning, had laid basic communications among partners. Consequently when initiating the project, interaction amongst the different sectors will be easy.

As for the project barriers, the different interviewees revealed several issues. The academic institution interviewee believed that the lack of faculty resources represents a real barrier for the partnership success. Currently, not all the universities with high standards have enough faculty resources of good quality. Even those who have the adequate number of faculty, they are dedicated for traditional learning thus do not have time for developing online courses. The lack of faculty resources for online courses is considered a main barrier for the academic respondent.

On the other hand, the lack of fund is considered a main barrier by the private sector respondent and international agency respondent. Previous related experiences are not encouraging regarding fund contribution. Several project initiation in the past failed due to lack of funding. In addition to this, the international agency and the private sector
respondents mentioned the lack of government priority concerning e-learning initiatives as a principle barrier. Currently the government is building one university campus and consolidating resources. Online education is not a main concern or priority. This will impact the government enthusiasm for e-learning partnership initiatives. Moreover, the government and private sector respondents emphasized on the lack of regulations and legal framework. As the government has not yet set the legal framework of e-learning, the online degrees of the partnership will not be accredited by the government authorities.

Besides this, one of the private sector interviewees considered lack of content as one of the main obstacles for the entity. E-learning requires infrastructure, tools, assessment, reporting, interactive lesson plans, multi-media content. The lack of these components creates a sort of impediment for the entity success.

Conversely, the government respondent mentioned the lack of telecom infrastructure as a barrier for e-learning. Online education does not require only information technology infrastructure, but also telecom infrastructure. The delay of privatization and market liberalization had hindered the advancement of telecom infrastructure. Besides this, the respondent from the government pointed up the academic institutions unwillingness to invest in e-learning. This is due to the fact that the academic institutions have to change curriculums and methods of delivery, consequently a paradigm shift. Accordingly, they prefer to keep focusing their efforts on traditional learning.

2. Reasons for E-learning

All the respondents denoted the country need for an e-learning institution. One of the private sector respondents believed that it is a source for alternatives in education.
In addition to this, the country requires high-quality education distributed evenly. Alternatively, the government respondent stressed on the private sector needs for executive and professional training courses.

On the other hand, the private sector and government respondents emphasized on the importance of the project as it places Lebanon on the information society track. As the country is rich in paper content, it is very important to digitize it, especially the Arabic subjects.

Alternatively, the government interviewee considered that there is a need for e-learning as different sectors will benefit. The private sector main benefit is new business opportunities for ICT skills and IT professionals. The government will benefit from online education by exploiting it in secondary school classes and training teachers all over the country. Finally, the society is in need for e-learning as it can provide it informal education for people who want to study but do not have the means. For example, community centers can be established where the required equipments for online education are provided.

3. Ideal Partnership

The interviewee from all the different sectors agreed on several issues regarding the ideal partnership. They advised that each partner must have a defined role in order for each one to know its own responsibilities, duties, and compensations. In addition to this, all the different sectors must assess the market needs of the e-learning.

Several respondents advised to add a partner to the ones mentioned in the proposed model. The respondent from the international agency recommended having an international agency as a partner. According to him, an international agency enriches the partnership model in several ways. First, it usually has a lot experience concerning
e-learning education and in helping partnerships to be a success. Numerous similar projects were initiated in the world and their success was to a large extent owed to the collaborating international agencies. Second, one of the main duties of international agencies is to fund projects that have a social impact. Thus, there is a high probability that the e-learning partnership project to be funded by an international agency.

On the other hand, the respondent from the government advised to add Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) as a partner. It is believed that the NGOs play an active role on the community level, therefore the benefits of the partnership will be spread in a better way. In addition to this, they can provide funding to the partnership as they get financial support from international agencies. Finally, the experience of NGOs enables them to actively participate in the curriculum setting.

Parallel to this, one of the private sector respondents thinks that the suggested model needs to partner with a content provider. E-learning requires high quality content which necessitates dedicated full-time team that any of the partners cannot assure. The other partners can develop some content but not with the same high-quality as content provider. This recommendation is in contradiction with the government respondent who believes that the academic institutions should set a specialized team responsible for multimedia production and content development.

With regard to the government role in the partnership, several suggestions were provided. The respondent from the academic sector proposed not to have the government as a partner. It is better to limit its responsibility to an evaluator – program accreditation- and monitor. Past experience had shown that when government played a partner role the results were not as expected.

Alternatively, the private sector prefers to keep the government with the other partners and increase its functions. One of the private sector interviewee suppose that
the government should not only help in the legal framework but also in acquiring learning resources such as hardware and software, contributing in effort and time. The interviewee from the government sees that the government should not be a passive partner, but an active one. It has several duties to accomplish such as: establishing the adequate telecom infrastructure, setting the legal framework, and accrediting programs.

The proposed model identifies the private sector being a partner. One of the private sector interviewee said that international companies have their own online training delivered to their employees. Thus, the partnership should address small, medium enterprises (SME) since they have neither the means nor the vision for training their employees. A reasonable annual fee can be paid by the SME as a contribution to the partnership for the high quality training offered to their employees.

Concerning the funding of the e-learning institution respondents proposed that academic institutions, private sector, government, and international agencies to contribute in the funding. However one of the private sector interviewee think that a source of funding may be from investors. Joint ventures or venture capital are possible ways to acquire the funds.

4. Ideal Role of the Other Two Sectors

The academic sector believes that the fund should be contributed mainly by the private sector while the academic institutions contribute in the funding through cost sharing. The reason behind the cost sharing is that in order to be a real partner, academic institutions should participate in the entity funding. Most of the private sector respondents think that the main fund contributor should not be the private sector. The capital can be obtained from investors, NGOs, and / or international agencies. On the other hand the respondent from the government advices to get the fund mainly from the
academic institutions, NGOs / International agencies. The private sector comes in the second place, while it is not required from the government to contribute financially in the project. Finally, the respondent from the international agency recommend that funding to be contributed mainly by the international agencies and private sector. Academic institutions come in the second level concerning the funding and then the government.

As for the infrastructure setting of the project, different ideas were suggested. The academic respondent thinks that the private sector should be responsible for setting the infrastructure. Infrastructure is not limited to hardware, but also to other issues such as: computers use, information transformation, test design, interactivity level, technical problem solutions, webpage design, etc. Conversely, one of the private sector respondents suggested that the information technology instruments should be supplied by the government to remote communities. According to this opinion, remote communities cannot benefit from e-learning since they are not equipped with the adequate information technology instruments. Thus, establishing centers with a satisfactory level of technology instruments in municipalities will help those in remote areas to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, the government respondent considers that the private sector has a national role to play regarding product supply. Most of the information technology infrastructure can be used for different purposes such as e-learning or e-commerce. Thus, private sector is encouraged to deliver the products of the project at a discount. In addition to this, the respondent assumes that the private sector should provide the technical expertise for the foreign imported products, otherwise it will be very costly for the entity to maintain the infrastructure. Similar to the government, the international agency respondent suggested that the infrastructure should be provided by the government.
Regarding the curriculum design, all the respondents from the different sectors agreed that it is the main duty of academic institutions. However, the interviewee from the government sector recommended that not only academic institutions be involved in curriculum design, but also NGOs. This is due to the fact that they are in direct contact with community and know the main needs. NGOs will help in setting special content to the society such as geographic education, agricultural education, etc. Academia alone cannot identify such needs, thus it is better to have NGOs participate. On the other hand, the interviewee from an international agency suggested that international agencies have to participate in curriculum design as they enjoy an extensive experience in that field. Sharing their experience in e-learning partnerships abroad is highly beneficial.

5. Strengths and Risks of Partnership

All the sectors respondents talked about a synergy in this partnership. Each sector is contributing in its own competitive advantage area, thus the partnership has the capacity to accomplish more instead of each partner working alone. More brains, expertise, and stakeholders are working together to attain success. In addition to this, they had all the same opinion about the risks of the partnership. Different sectors with different backgrounds and distinct work mentalities are functioning together, thus there is a risk that a clash of values to take place. The reason behind this is that each partner has different set of values, for example, the academic institutions have their main goal to disseminate knowledge while private sector main objective is to have profitable operations leading to net profits. Besides this, the respondent from the academic sector mentioned that academic people complicates things in their discussions and add ambiguity while the private sector is more practical. On the other hand, one of the private sector respondents pointed out that in order to diminish the background
difference impact, each partner should be addressed by its own language.

Regarding other strengths, the respondent from the government stressed on the fact that one of the partnership strengths is having a shorter learning process. As it is a pool of knowledge among different sectors, knowledge is disseminated faster leading to a shorter learning process. Parallel to this, one of the private sector respondents perceives as a strength that the different participating sectors in the partnership are ready. Their readiness will cause less problems and more harmony.

In contrast to this, the academic respondent mentioned that the fact that people in Lebanon prefer traditional education than e-learning is a significant risk factor to the partnership. This may cause a low enrollment in the courses, thus negative consequences. Moreover, the government respondent drew the attention to a conflict of interest risk. If roles were not defined clearly, some partners may be doing some activities that should not be done or be done by other partners.

6. Partnership Outcome

Concerning the partnership outcome, all the respondents, except the respondent from the academic institution, emphasized on providing degrees. There answer is based on the fact that an e-learning institution main goal is to provide degrees. However, the academic respondent had a different point of view. It is better to start with training certificate programs, then after acquiring experience in delivering online courses start with online degrees. Offering online a degree with low quality is very risky for the partnership since will reflect badly on its image and reputation.

Regarding the outcome recipient, different opinions were given. One of the private sector interviewee suggested tackling the government employees as they are the largest class of recipient. The government personnel are in need of high quality training
courses. Their needs are diverse as they are involved in different fields. On the other hand, the academic interviewee advised on finding market niches. Instead of replicating same knowledge, it is better to find the main outcome recipients and design courses accordingly. The government respondent accentuated on the public employees need for online training courses. However, most of them will not get the benefit of online training unless they acquire the basic computer skills. In addition to this, the government interviewee encouraged the partnership to target the underprivileged society by delivering affordable, free or inexpensive, informal education. It will be of great benefit for the disadvantaged people since will be able to acquire education and improve their skills and knowledge.

As for the programs accreditation and quality, all the recipients agreed on providing high quality training courses and academic degrees. In addition to this, one of the private sector respondents and the international agency respondent suggested not only be accredited from the ministry of higher education but also be accredited from international accreditation agencies. Students will be more willing to study online programs accredited from worldwide distance learning association instead of being only accredited from the ministry of higher education. Moreover, the government respondent believed that the partnership should focus on providing affordable high quality courses instead of low cost training courses with acceptable quality. Quality should be the first priority while producing courses and not the cost.

On the subject of outcome enhancement, all the respondents advised to study and focus on the market needs. The different partners should assess the market needs for online degrees and training courses. As per the government respondent, the most two important needs of each sector should be identified and provided as a pilot test. After the success of the pilot test phase, the other needs for courses are executed. In addition
to this, the government respondent suggested that the entity to start with e-learning degrees and private sector training courses. After acquiring enough experience in the programs delivered and being a success, initiate the government personnel training programs.

Besides this, one respondent from the private sector mentioned that the partnership can create a competition through online academic education with the new universities providing low quality courses. These new universities are attracting students since inexpensive, thus “good” ones are enrolling there. As the partnership aim is to deliver high quality and low cost education, it will have a competitive advantage over those universities. Furthermore, one of the private sector respondents emphasized on creating an academic – business link. The academic and training courses should be directly related to the needs of the market and technical work. Courses in agriculture education and food production are advised to be offered.

7. Partnership Idea Enhancement

Pertaining to partnership idea enhancement, one of the private sector interviewee and the academic respondent mentioned the development of a business plan. According to them, a business plan will establish a defined role for each partner, objectives, and goal of the partnership. Two of the private sector respondents highlighted the importance of the financial section in the business plan as it is one of the focal areas that the private sector relies on in order to take decisions.

Concerning the number of partners in each sector, the academic respondent advised not to tie to one partner in a specific sector. On the contrary, the entity should have several partners from the same sector. In case one of the partners decides to leave the partnership, it can continue its activities without being too much affected. On the
other hand, one of the private sector respondents believed that it is better to work with a very limited number of partners. The idea should be presented to several institutions, however choose only few of them who are the most interested.

Regarding the entity operations, the respondent from the international agency stressed on the fact that the partnership should achieve sustainability. After undertaking all the costs related to the partnership establishment, it should be at least able to cover its operating expenditures from the generated revenues. Several sectors will be financing the project in its initiation phase, later revenues from the outcome delivered has to exceed operating costs at least.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Adjusted Partnership Model

The interviews conducted with key people revealed that the proposed model requires some modifications in order to make it better. When taking the suggestions and proposals of the respondents, it is best to adjust the model as follows in Figure 2.

The adjusted model includes a new partner: International Agencies / NGO. As some of the interviews revealed there is a need for the international agencies / NGO sectors for the following reasons:

- An international agency can play the role of the main fund contributor to the partnership. Usually such agencies have funds whose aim is to help in establishing such institutions.

- Typically some international agencies and NGOs have experience acquired abroad in e-learning partnerships between the private and public sectors. Having them in this model is very helpful as knowledge and experience will be shared among participants leading to a higher success chances and better outcome quality.

- As international agencies have participated previously in such projects, they can contribute in the curriculum design. Such agencies have normally educational departments that are specialized in designing instructive programs.

- NGOs are very active in Lebanon on the community level. They know exactly the communities needs, thus can be very helpful in determining the partnership outcome adequate for communities special needs.
Besides adding a partner to the model, several key activities should be included to each partner involved in this partnership:
• Academic institutions have to participate in the partnership funding in order to be considered a real partner. This can be done through cost sharing in specific activities related to the partnership outcome. Academic institutions have endowment funds and investments whose returns may be directed towards the partnership fund contribution.

• The private sector has to play a role in curriculum design. Since the learners are getting education for being integrated in the workforce, the private sector has to take part in the programs setting. Most of the times, the private sector criticized the educational system for not providing the adequate skills and knowledge to students. In this way, there will be a proper match of skills and knowledge between what is supplied at the entity and what is demanded by the private sector.

• The private sector is requested to supply products at a discount. The equipments used for e-learning are similar to those utilized in e-commerce or e-business. Since e-learning has an impact on the society educational level and for underprivileged people, the private sector is invited to play a patriotic role by offering products at lower prices than to commercial institutions.

• The government has to improve the telecom industry in Lebanon. Due to the privatization postponement and lack of regulation, telecom industry is still behind advanced stages attained in developed countries. The government has to develop the telecom industry and as a partner in this entity it has to be flexible in regulations such as uploading and downloading information through satellites.

• Given that e-learning cannot be delivered to learners without appropriate devices like computers, printers, telephone line, and internet, the government has to supply it to underprivileged people. Disadvantaged population, especially in rural areas, cannot afford buying those instruments, thus the government is invited to establish
centers equipped with adequate instruments in several areas under the municipalities supervision.

B. Limitations

There are limitations to this exploratory research study that can be improved through several aspects:

- Lack of time is one essential drawback in this study. More time can be beneficial for interviewing more people and getting their suggestions and recommendations. In this study, six interviews were conducted with key persons in their institutions. It is recommended that the number be increased in the future for better results.

- Lack of reviewing the adjusted model is another major limitation. The final model was not presented to experts in the e-learning field. It is suggested to introduce it to key persons to get final recommendations.

- Having convenience interviews is also considered an additional limitation to this study. The interviewees were chosen based on convenience and cannot be considered as representatives of a definable population. It is recommended to utilize comprehensive sampling techniques that will help in getting eligible interviewees representing the required population.

C. Recommendations

From the literature review and interview responses, the following recommendations are addressed to the partnership entity:

- Identify common areas where the different sectors can collaborate together without having a conflict among each other.
• Focus on small, medium enterprises (SME) as they do not have the means nor the vision for training their employees, while multinational corporations have their online training.

• Include special training courses like agricultural education and basic food production in the partnership outcome. These courses are very beneficial for people in rural areas as they need it.

• Get international accreditation from international distance learning associations besides the local accreditation from the ministry of higher education. International accreditations will enhance the partnership image.

• Study and focus on the market needs. All the sectors have to participate in the market study for its needs, instead of replicating same knowledge provided by one of the partners and thus compete with that partner.

• Create high quality courses at low costs, thus compete with the “new universities” in Lebanon that are focusing only on low costs courses.

• Create academic – business link as it develops a strong relationship between the academic sector and the private sector. This relationship will have a positive impact on the learners as will improve their skills acquired in education.

• Develop a business plan focusing on the financial part as it is the main section that the private sector decision is based on. The business plan should be comprehensive and emphasizing on the relationship among the different partners. In addition to this, it should define the entity legal structure. The recommended structure is to have a not-for-profit organization whose board of trustees is composed of representatives of the different sectors.

• Achieve sustainability from operations is an essential issue for the partnership entity. The revenues generated from academic and training courses should
be able at least to cover the operating costs of the entity. A continuous deficit in the operations may lead to the withdrawal of some partners.
APPENDIX I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our partnership model presents a solid commitment to the e-learning project. The partners involved in this joint venture are academic institutions, private sector, and government:

- The **academic institutions** play the role of knowledge provider. The main key activities of these institutions are: academic content, curriculum design, student assessment, faculty training, organizational & individual assessment, and provider of low cost highly trained personnel such as graduate assistants.
- The **private sector** participates in the partnership as a resource provider. Its main role is to set the information technology infrastructure, identify its needed training courses, contribute in the capital of the partnership, share experience obtained from corporate universities abroad.
- The **government** role in the partnership is to arrange the legal status of the institution created, assist in the accreditation of the programs at the ministry of higher education, and become a recipient (customer) of the programs delivered.

**Partnership needs:**
Providing e-learning programs requires a lot of experience in order to be a success. For an academic institution to initiate e-learning programs alone is very difficult, complicated, and expensive. It necessitates various disciplines to team up for a better distance education delivery, thus there is a need for the partnership:

- Training the faculty on content development, course delivery and administration, student assessment, etc.
- Setting the information technology infrastructure
- Acquiring the needed capital fund for the establishment and running of the project
- Identifying the corporation needs for online training.
- Conforming to legal aspect of higher education in Lebanon and program accreditation.

**Partnership benefits:**
The partnership offers a number of potential benefits to numerous parties involved and interested in online learning such as:

- Creating education-industry link as businesses are collaborating with academics.
- Sectors contributing in domains representing their competitive advantages, and not tackling every area in the electronic education process.
- Giving access to private funding by corporations who realize that partnering in this project is beneficial.
- Reducing redundancy to a great extent due to the use of resources more effectively.
- Delivering low-cost training courses to the private sector.
Providing high-quality training and workshops to the government personnel.
APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For the following statements, please refer to the executive summary and flowchart.

1. Concerning the project above, identify 3 – 5 SUCESS factors and 3 – 5 BARRIERS.

2. Assume it would happen in Lebanon, give 3 – 5 main REASONS for its establishment.

3. How do you think an IDEAL partnership should work?

4. What is in your opinion the IDEAL role of the other TWO SECTORS involved in this project?

5. What are the STRENGTHS and RISKS of the partnership?

6. What do you think about the partnership OUTCOME? Is it REALISTIC?

7. How can the OUTCOME be ENHANCED?

8. Any suggestions for enhancing the partnership IDEA?
# APPENDIX III

## INTERVIEW ANSWERS (CUT AND PASTE METHOD)

### Question 1:
Concerning the project above, identify 3 – 5 SUCCESS factors and 3 – 5 BARRIERS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic institutions</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>International agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Academic institutions understand advantages and disadvantages of e-learning: using the wrong tools lead to unsuccessful results.</td>
<td><strong>Buy-in of each stakeholder sector:</strong> Get the different sectors actively involved. Convince them that there is a benefit from the partnership.</td>
<td><strong>Lebanon is rich with paper-based content:</strong> resources are there but should be digitized.</td>
<td>1. Project has an impact on the whole country: first e-learning initiative in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Create the right environment where technology works: not only IT but also video conferencing, fax, telephone, etc.</td>
<td><strong>Identify correct segment and its own need.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Existence of human capital</strong> capable in initiating e-learning successfully.</td>
<td>2. Capacity building: faculty training, government employees training, facilitating people life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Faculty resources: not have enough faculty resources of good quality. Even if the academic institution has enough faculty for traditional courses, do not have enough time for developing courses. Cannot assume that we have unlimited faculty resources.</td>
<td><strong>Find common areas where different sectors can cooperate</strong> together.</td>
<td><strong>Some universities are interested in e-learning</strong> and started developing content 2 years ago.</td>
<td>3. Sustainability achievement: project should generate money in order to cover its operating expenditures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intellectual property: Have a clear division what the faculty owns, university own, and resource providers own. How is there relationship: contract basis, royalties?</td>
<td><strong>Lack of content:</strong> E-learning requires infrastructure, tools, assessment, reporting, interactive lesson plans, multi-media content. Mentality should change. Cannot scan a book and put it online.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of legal framework</strong> for e-learning degrees.</td>
<td>4. Jobs creation: the project will create jobs and will facilitate finding jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lack of government priorities: Currently government is building one university campus and consolidating resources. E-learning partnership is not a priority.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of telecom infrastructure:</strong> delay of privatization and market liberalization is delaying its setting.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of telecom infrastructure:</strong> 6. Unwillingness of academic institutions to invest in e-learning: they have to change curriculums and method of delivery, thus requires a paradigm shift.</td>
<td>5. Existence of communication channel: laid channels of understanding on previous projects (not related to e-learning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Focus on the need of each partner: eg. Microsoft has its own training resources. Thus, focus on SME.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of telecom infrastructure:</strong> delay of privatization and market liberalization is delaying its setting.</td>
<td><strong>Existence of communication channel:</strong> laid channels of understanding on previous projects (not related to e-learning).</td>
<td>6. Lack of partners: there are not enough partners for the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lack of funds: the project requires a lot of investments on the IT infrastructure, content, human, etc.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of needs:</strong> development is not coordinating all stakeholders needs.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of telecom infrastructure:</strong> delay of privatization and market liberalization is delaying its setting.</td>
<td>7. Lack of funds: the project requires a lot of investments on the IT infrastructure, content, human, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lack of government cooperation: the</td>
<td><strong>Lack of need in the whole country:</strong> initiative not being supported by the government.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of telecom infrastructure:</strong> delay of privatization and market liberalization is delaying its setting.</td>
<td>8. Lack of government cooperation: the</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7. Show the private sector **tangible results**: short-term and medium-term profits.

8. **Lack of funding**: Previous related experiences are not encouraging.

9. **Be politically neutral**: Do not associate it with anyone.

10. People **resistance to change**: Prefer to learn through the traditional way.

11. **Lack of regulations** for e-learning institution: Not accredited.

project is not a priority for the government.
**Question 2:** Assume it would happen in Lebanon, give 3 – 5 main **REASONS** for its establishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic institutions</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Lebanese entrepreneurial society:</strong> Understand how to take risks.</td>
<td>1. Source for alternatives in education.</td>
<td>1- The <strong>private sector needs</strong> executive education and professional training courses.</td>
<td>1- The <strong>country needs e-learning institutions.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Free capital society:</strong> Capital can start new business relatively easy.</td>
<td>2. Education at affordable costs: less expensive than traditional education since do not involve costly setup.</td>
<td>2- <strong>Place Lebanon on the information society track:</strong> by having online content and digitizing paper resources, especially in Arabic.</td>
<td>2- <strong>E-learning</strong> is still at its initial stages: a strong entity is very important at this stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Pluralistic university system:</strong> public and private universities at various levels. The market needs different systems for different audiences.</td>
<td>3. Education catered for people with specific needs: People living in remote areas or having health problems.</td>
<td>3- <strong>Benefit for the private sector:</strong> new business opportunities for ICT skills and professionals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Regional need:</strong> Duplicate in the region ex: Gulf.</td>
<td>4. <strong>Online courses</strong> going along with <strong>e-concept.</strong></td>
<td>4- <strong>Benefit for the government:</strong> using the e-learning is secondary schools makes operation cost-effective.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Need for good education distributed all over Lebanon: offering the right programs to remote regions.</td>
<td>5- <strong>Benefit for the society:</strong> provide informal education for people who want to study but do not have the mean by establishing community centers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Target professional people: professional education for those who want to improve in their jobs.</td>
<td>6- <strong>Complementary to traditional education:</strong> student cannot grasp all information in one shot in classroom, e-learning enhances knowledge retention.</td>
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</table>
**Question 3:** How do you think an IDEAL partnership should work?

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clearly <strong>define roles:</strong> who is going to do what, how is compensation be set, who is the content owner.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Getting the most of each partner:</strong> each sector contribution in the partnership should be to fulfill its initial main goal.</td>
<td>1. Add a partner – <strong>NGO / International Agencies:</strong> play a role on the community level, contribute in the curriculum, and funding.</td>
<td>1. Add a partner – <strong>International Agencies:</strong> share e-learning experience, contribute in the funding, and assess training needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Marketing and advertising</strong> the entity: usually businesses prefer to advertise, while the academics are more conservative.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Find role for each sector in the partnership:</strong> Government- not only help in legal framework, but also tailor their specific courses, contributes in learning resources (computers), effort, and time.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Responsibility of government to establish telecom infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>2. <strong>All partners</strong> should participate in <strong>identifying training courses.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Keep the <strong>government outside the partnership:</strong> its role is only to evaluate and monitor.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Partner with content provider:</strong> e-learning requires the partnership with content provider since very difficult for academics alone to produce it for all courses.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Responsibility of academics and private sector for setting the IT:</strong> computers, software, cables, servers, etc.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Assess the market needs:</strong> have cross-reference among all sectors.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>4. <strong>Partner with SME:</strong> Big companies have their own training department and online courses. Thus will not need the partnership courses. But there is a high need for online training by SME.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. <strong>Find capital from investors not companies:</strong> joint ventures, capital funds, venture capital, investors.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. <strong>Involves private sector in knowledge dissemination:</strong> teaching since gives a lot of practical experience.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. <strong>Find capital from agencies not investors:</strong> NGO, World Bank, USAID.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. <strong>Evaluate the need of regional countries:</strong> Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, etc may use the e-learning initiative.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Question 4: What is in your opinion the IDEAL role of the other TWO SECTORS involved in this project?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Private sector</strong> provides the capital fund.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Academic institutions to provide good education to new communities</strong>: make sure it reaches new students through cameras in classrooms.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Academic institutions to have e-learning part of their program structure</strong>: students required to take some courses through e-learning even if traditional program.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Government to be more active</strong>: be the main responsible for the IT infrastructure, main capital provider, and training need assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Academic institutions</strong> contribute in the capital through cost sharing: must provide some money in order to be a real partner, otherwise have less control.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Government put politics aside</strong>: key player since in touch with donors and communities.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Academic institutions consistently upgrading content</strong>: requires specialized team, multimedia production team since do not rely solely on published books.</td>
<td>2. <strong>International agencies to share experience</strong> in e-learning partnerships abroad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Private sector responsible too for infrastructure and design</strong>: how to use effectively computers to transform information, test design, interactivity level, technical problems, web page design, etc.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Government should be an active partner</strong>: the proposed model shows that it is a passive partner. Find the other sector need from government on continuous basis.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Academic institutions to provide funding</strong>: some endowments be routed partially to e-learning.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Academic institutions and International agencies</strong> to contribute in curriculum design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Academic institutions should have the major saying</strong>: identify what is needed from them by other sectors.</td>
<td>4. <strong>Private sector to provide latest e-learning enabling solutions</strong>: cannot rely on foreign imported products without local technical expertise.</td>
<td>4. <strong>Private sector to be a knowledge transferor</strong>: international companies have experience in this domain.</td>
<td>4. Capital fund should be mainly contributed by international agencies and private sector, then by academic institutions, then by government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Government supply IT instruments</strong> to remote communities: municipalities, local governments, etc.</td>
<td>5. <strong>Private sector to be a knowledge transferor</strong>: international companies have experience in this domain.</td>
<td>5. <strong>Private sector to provide e-learning products at a discount</strong>: products for educational purposes to be provided at discount.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>No need for having a partnership</strong>: continue each one alone as in traditional learning.</td>
<td>6. <strong>Private sector to provide e-learning products at a discount</strong>: products for educational purposes to be provided at discount.</td>
<td>7. <strong>Private sector contributes in the fund</strong>: share in providing funding but not main contributor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>NGO helps underprivileged people get education</strong>: they are in direct contact with disadvantaged</td>
<td>8. <strong>NGO helps underprivileged people get education</strong>: they are in direct contact with disadvantaged</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9. NGO provides special content to educate society: geographic education, agricultural work education, etc.

10. NGO contributes in funding: as they get funding from international agencies.

Question 5: What are the STRENGTHS and RISKS of the partnership?

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Each sector focuses on its competitive advantage.</td>
<td>1. Partnership relies on each sector strengths.</td>
<td>1. More brains, expertise, and stakeholders working together to achieve success.</td>
<td>1. Each sector contributing in its competitive advantage area: partnership achieves more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Different work mentality: academic complicates things, while private sector is more practical.</td>
<td>2. Different sectors are ready for the partnership</td>
<td>2. Learning process is shorter: pool of knowledge is much higher collectively than individually.</td>
<td>2. Having a body composed of different sectors with different background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People prefer traditional courses</td>
<td>3. Difficult to bring different sectors to work together: should motivate them and talk to them with their own language.</td>
<td>3. Conflict of interest: having a partner doing something that should not be done or done by another partner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. New opportunities for private sector to benefit: job creation</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4. Lack of interest by a partner: not giving an importance and be a passive partner.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Question 6:** What do you think about the partnership **OUTCOME**? Is it **REALISTIC**?

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Government personnel</strong> are the <strong>largest recipients</strong> for the partnership outcome: they are in need for these high quality low cost courses. Study their needs.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Government personnel</strong> are the <strong>largest recipients</strong> for the partnership outcome: they are in need for these high quality low cost courses. Study their needs.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Add a fourth outcome: affordable, free or cost effective, education to underprivileged society.</strong></td>
<td>1. <strong>E-learning degrees</strong> is the <strong>most important outcome.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Find <strong>market niches</strong> instead of replicating same knowledge.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Focus on providing e-learning degree:</strong> either totally (all courses online), or partially (some courses online and others traditional delivery).</td>
<td>2. Do not focus on <strong>multinational companies.</strong> <strong>Concentrate on SME</strong> since do not have means and vision</td>
<td>2. Do not focus on <strong>low cost training courses,</strong> but on <strong>affordable high quality courses.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Focus on the <strong>high quality of professional courses and academic degrees.</strong></td>
<td>3. <strong>Get not only local accreditation</strong> for program degrees but <strong>also international accreditation:</strong> be a member in worldwide distance learning associations.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Government employees needs online training courses,</strong> but first should get IT basic skills.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Do not aim government employees:</strong> consider them as those of private sector and they will benefit from courses as ordinary employees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. <strong>E-learning degrees</strong> are very <strong>important</strong> since reach remote regions.</td>
<td>4. <strong>For outcome to succeed, define who are recipients:</strong> recipients should know how to use technology, willing, and self-disciplined.</td>
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### Question 7: How can the OUTCOME be ENHANCED?

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<tr>
<th>Academic institutions</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>International agencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focus on the <strong>market needs</strong>: Provide high quality courses, that are needed by the market.</td>
<td>1. Focus on the <strong>quality</strong> and <strong>cost</strong> of <strong>training courses</strong>: Private sector welcomes high quality and low cost training courses.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Know the need of different sectors</strong>: focus on their first two priorities and provide as pilot test.</td>
<td>1. Study the <strong>market needs</strong>: different sectors should contribute in market needs assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Multinational companies have their own online training</strong>, but their <strong>business partners</strong> do not have access to these courses: plan to have those partners as the program recipient.</td>
<td>2. <strong>Get accreditation for the e-learning degrees</strong>.</td>
<td>2. Get <strong>international accreditation</strong> for the e-learning degrees: international standards.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Creation of competition through online academic education</strong>: Good students are enrolling in new universities with low quality since inexpensive. Compete by having high quality courses.</td>
<td>3. <strong>Start with e-learning degrees and private sector training courses</strong>: after their success initiate government personnel training.</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Academic – Business link</strong>: Provide courses that are related directly to workforce technical work – courses in agriculture, food production, etc.</td>
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Question 8: Any suggestions for enhancing the partnership IDEA?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop a business model / plan.</td>
<td>1. Establish a real partnership, not a one-time service: more roles for government.</td>
<td>1. NGO, as a partner, will enhance the partnership performance: resource, curriculum, underprivileged people reach, and funding.</td>
<td>1. International agencies, as a partner, will have a positive impact on the partnership: resource, curriculum, and human levels.</td>
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<td>2. Advertise the entity outcome well.</td>
<td>2. Develop a business plan focusing on gains / profits.</td>
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<td>2. Plan to fill the gap between public-private: with the help of international agencies experience.</td>
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<td>3. Satisfy market by delivering what it needs.</td>
<td>3. Present idea to several entities, but work with a very limited number of partners: the ones who are most interested.</td>
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<td>3. Focus on achieving sustainability: the entity should be able to cover its operating expenditures.</td>
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<td>4. Sell quality not convenience.</td>
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<td>5. Do not tie to one partner: have several academic institutions and several businesses in the partnership.</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


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