The Role of Virtual Organizations in Post-Graduate Education in Egypt: The Case of the Regional IT Institute

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning, education and training using traditional class methods and/or emerging online techniques are all leading to improved ways to investing in people, leveraging their capacities and reaching out to remote masses while cutting down on cost, time and efforts. Thus, the role of virtual organizations and virtual teams is rapidly spreading worldwide in the related aspects to learning and human resources development. This has led to the establishment of a large number of regional and global learning consortiums and networks aiming to provide quality knowledge and information dissemination vehicles to an ever-growing community of seekers that is online, active and eager to increasingly learn more. However, most of the publications address the theoretical foundations of virtual organizations; as for the actual practices, they are not extensively reported in the literature. This case addresses the experience of Egypt’s Regional IT Institute in the field of education and training. Today, the learning process is becoming a vital factor in business and socioeconomic growth where the role of information and communication
technology is having a growing and an innovative impact. The Regional IT Institute was established in 1992 targeting the formulation of partnerships and strategic alliances to jointly deliver degree (academic) and non-degree (executive) programs for the local community capitalizing on the enabled processes and techniques of virtual organizations. The case provides many lessons to be replicated that demonstrate the opportunity to expand in exchanging the wealth of knowledge across societies using a hybrid of forms for virtual organizations and virtual teams.

**INTRODUCTION**

New online learning and education techniques are leading to improved ways to investing in larger numbers of people and to leveraging their capacities with fewer resources. Respectively, virtual organizations are gaining grounds in the educational sector. However, the essence is to provide mechanisms for knowledge acquisition and dissemination to a growing global society of learners and trainees. This is an important vehicle to close the global digital divide and a mechanism to reach out to the remote areas worldwide. Egypt has had a number of experiences in that direction in an attempt to leverage its literacy rate while making optimum use of its limited resources. This chapter covers the case of the Regional IT Institute, an institute located in Cairo and specialized in providing quality education in the field of information and communication technology and management. However, it is important first to explore the environment in which the institute has been operating for almost a decade.

Egypt is the cradle of an ancient civilization dating back to 3000 BC. With a population of about 68 million, out of which 19 million are in its workforce, Egypt is the most populous country within the region. About 24% of its population is in the education stages. It has the second largest economy in the Middle East and has successfully implemented its economic reform program that has enabled its current economic growth rate to stand at 6.2% annually with an inflation rate of 2.1%. Egypt has four basic sources of foreign exchange earnings equally divided between tourism, oil, Suez Canal earnings and remittances of Egyptians working abroad (Kamel, 1999). Cairo, the capital of Egypt, is a large metropolis where buildings of French and English architecture stand next to modern skyscrapers. Cairo’s 18 million inhabitants constitute nearly 27% of the total population. Egypt, like many other developing countries, is trying to expand its industrial base and modernize itself technologically. Agriculture accounts for 15% of the gross domestic product and industry accounts for 40% with a large service sector mainly built around tourism and transportation. Its major exports are human resource capacities,