

# Traditional Higher Education vs. Distance Education: A Critique on Models of Educational Change Theories

Sanaa Salman Shindi

*College of Economy and administration, University of Babylon*

[sashindi4@gmail.com](mailto:sashindi4@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The higher education institution is one of the most innovative and important tools in respect of the development of any society. Yet, its role in the developing countries is still limited to many traditional styles like theoretical lectures which depend on memorization and collecting information without paying attention to the collective action and the application of knowledge specially in Iraqi Universities. This study deals with the formerly mentioned problematic issues related to academic institutions in the developing countries by using the social theory. However, paying more attention Iraqi universities should be working hard to support the transitional issues of moving from traditional education to distance education.

**Keyword :** Higher Education, Innovative, Traditional education, Distance education, Social theory, Iraqi Universities, IDEAL (Innovative Digital Education and Learning), Blackboard (Course Tools), Web-CT (Course Tools)

## الخلاصة

تعتبر مؤسسات التعليم العالي هي واحدة من أكثر الأدوات المبتكرة والهامة لتنمية المجتمع. ومع ذلك فإن دورها في البلدان النامية لا يزال محدودا بأستخدام العديد من الأساليب التقليدية مثل المحاضرات النظرية التي تعتمد على التلقين وجمع المعلومات دون الالتفات إلى العمل الجماعي وتطبيق المعرفة والتعلم وخاصة في الجامعات العراقية. تتناول هذه الدراسة مع القضايا الإشكالية المذكورة سابقا المتصلة بالمؤسسات الأكاديمية في البلدان النامية لتحليلها بأستخدام النظرية الاجتماعية مع إبقاء المزيد من الاهتمام بالجامعات العراقية على ان تعمل بجد لدعم قضايا الانتقالية من التعليم التقليدي إلى التعليم عن بعد.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مؤسسات التعليم العالي، الإبداع، التعليم التقليدي، التعلم عن بعد، النظرية الاجتماعية، الجامعات العراقية، ابتكار التعليم والتعلم الإلكتروني، تعتبر من أهم أدوات التعلم عن بعد، تعتبر من أهم أدوات التعلم عن بعد.

## Introduction

Universities at the developing countries are using the traditional styles in teaching and learning. There are other limitations include restricted scientific potentials and the lack of academic freedom, in addition to the slight awareness of the indispensable needs and developments of the business world. These traditional styles and other factors lead these institutions, not only to be marginalized from the global environment of the competition with other universities worldwide, but also reduced the societal role of the university and neutralized the accordance between the university outcomes and needs of the business world.

However, paying more attention to infrastructure, those universities have sought to improve their academic performance through involving various academic disciplines and professional specializations. They enthusiastically aim at achieving the wanted development through the expansion in academic departments and specializations. Also, they seek to adopt models of more academically advanced universities and try to apply these models; a process that requires an in-depth study on the feasibility of the application of such models. Christensen & Eyring (2011, p.1) explains "Traditional universities have spent the past century getting bigger and better, following standards set by the great research institutions".

## **The Problem of the Study**

By embracing a certain theory, this study deals with the formerly mentioned problematic issues related to academic institutions in the developing countries. The problem that the social theory will treat is less of include technology like distance education at higher education institutions in Iraq. That will make a cultural shift at these institutions, so this will lead to educational change and economic change.

## **Objectives:**

- 1- To compare the traditional higher education styles vs. Distance education at the developing countries.
- 2- To develop an explanatory theory that associates the higher education change with other indicators such as IDEL (Innovative Digital Education and Learning ).
- 3- To describe a cultural shift at Iraqi higher education institutions.
- 4- To identify the factors leads to distance education.
- 5- To establish social theory with higher educational change.

## **Topic Background**

It is noteworthy to state that the emergence of the phenomenon of Globalization, which led to a fundamental change in contemporary economic path, is in the core of interest of academic institutions since the production of knowledge must be quite satisfactory to the essentials of this massive change in terms of providing the required society service. Hence, the developing countries cannot be excluded from this trend. In those countries the increasing social demand of a functional academic institution has necessitated the quantitative expansion of universities without benefiting from the positive aspects of globalization and the enormous technological advancements; a fact that required them to reconsider the costly university education as a whole in terms of their structure, management and organization. Accordingly, learning via the internet and online education at low cost can facilitate the academic development of those universities. This change will instigate creativity and leads, eventually, to the sustainability of higher education. Also, the need for the tertiary education has been realized because of the continuous increase in the number of students enrolled in higher education and the need to achieve high performance in the educational process.

The formerly mentioned concerns have created some problematic issues that should be solved to reach out for the more appropriate interaction between the institution and society. Economic potentials, recent information technologies, suitable infrastructure, development of teaching methods will enable these universities to enhance their productivity, sustain the professional skills and, consequently, magnify their social functions. According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2012, p.10) "higher education has been entrusted with an important social responsibility. This responsibility calls for a commitment to see that all students reach high standards and fulfill their potential. Doing so requires us to gather and report on evidence of student learning and uses it to improve student learning outcomes".

Most Iraqi Universities are comprehensive as far as their academic concerns with the academic specialties, core curricula, and prospectus. As a mandatory procedure these universities adopt model of change to improve the quality of Higher education. Any model of change process is designed to fit the specific needs of the particular university to be successful modal. This model of change needs a specific theory

which it deals with higher education institutions change issues and it will help this model to be successful modal. The ultimate goal of implying and adopting such a theory is to improve the quality of higher education. Moreover, this study will show how the theory shapes a good understanding of problems, work through the limits and possibilities of this theory.

It is the Social Theory.

### **Social Theory**

Social theory deals with the relation of higher education to the society as a whole. Karl Marx explained that the Social theory is a tool to analysis the society, and it is used in different fields such as anthropology, economics, history, human geography, philosophy, sociology, and theology. In addition, it is valued as research and teaching tool for students and professors in the field of sociology, Social Theory is designed to facilitate inquiry in the disciplines of economics, political science, race and gender studies, intellectual history, media studies, psychology and philosophy.

The history of this theory divides into three levels: pre-classical social theorists, classical social theorists, and modern social theory. Pre-classical social theorists has flourished during the period before 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also it has been described to be narrative and normative. The general form of this Theory is a story. The famous two persons who had been working in the theory were Sian Augustine and St.Thomas Aquinas. On the other hand, classical social theorists have been highlighted during the period in 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it included three theories: social evolutionism, social cycle theory, and Marxist historical materialism.

These three theories formulated historical as well as societal changes. Eventually, modern social theory is the modern shape of the classical social theory, and it includes two theories : Multilineal theories of evolution, and sociobiology.

One of the core beliefs of this theory is the change of the society as a whole. Social theory deal with the change for the society, but the society includes different kind of people , educate people (people who knows how to use technology) and un educated people (people who doesn't know how to use technology) and any change will lead to the class conflict, and some people will agree with this change and some disagree.

Smith (2001)said “Karl Marx a leader I agree with how will believed the social changes is what was needed for better society”. Leaders at higher education institutions in Iraq should be open mind for distance education cultural shift. They have to use different leadership styles with different kind of people by giving the people training course to teach them how to use technology, and encourage them to understand the benefits for using technology. This is an external factor environment that has strong effect to their institutions. Nworie (2012) said “The instructional delivery mode in distance education has been transitioning from the context of a physical classroom environment to a virtual learning environment or maintaining a hybrid of the two. However, most distance education programs in dual mode institutions are situated in traditional face-to-face instructional settings”.

Distance education serve learners at remote locations via print, audio, video, and computer. Distance education appears to be a locative business with both public and private sectors developing for the universities to meet the needs of learners at a distance. The problem that the social theory will treat is less of include technology like distance education at higher education institutions in Iraq. That will make a cultural shift at these institutions,

so this will lead to educational change and economic change. One of the core beliefs of this theory is the change of the society as a whole.

### **Overview of the Change**

Since IDEL (Innovative Digital Education and Learning) has been launched in 2007 all the educational organizations are trying to benefit from this system to provide and improve the practice of eLearning. There are on their changing process to migrate from WebCT to Blackboard to improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities as well as to meet the needs of new millenniums.

Most universities in advance countries have been using WebCT as distance education tools for its Learning Management System (LMS), since the mid 1990s. It has moved from Version 1.0 to the current version 4.1 over that time. Each new version has provided new functions to faculty and students. Those universities are using the older version of WebCT 4.1. The usage of the LMS has grown so that now approx. 60% of the faculty depends on the LMS on a regular basis to support their classrooms and 100% distance education courses. These universities have changed from WebCT to Blackboard, it is a new distance education tools. Because Blackboard provides many new features and enhancements that improve content delivery and ease of design, universities in advance countries are dedicated to providing its educational system with Blackboard because the informal lines of communication that used to work so well have become more difficult to maintain. Therefore, these universities moved to Blackboard by fall 2009. Universities in advance countries, the decision to go with IDEAL (Innovative Digital Education and Learning) mainly had to do with cost and support. It was going to be a cost savings of about \$30,000 a year for the universities system to go with the decision of IDEAL.

### **The Intended Purpose of the Change**

As mentioned from the introduction, the driving force for this change is due to the following reasons:

- The need to upgrade the technology products with new features and new technologies as the current product is going unsupported and companies eventually stop supporting older versions of their products. Also, to be current with the tendency of the companies in upgrading products.
- This change will directly benefit students and faculty as the new version provides new features including drag-and-drop uploads of content, better discussion boards, better grade-book functions, etc. The change will be adopted and implemented by these coming years when all the Iraqi universities courses will be moved to the distance education.

### **Strategies, Process and Approaches for the Change:**

The framework of principles guiding this change has been as follows:

The process of change should be carried out involving people from Deans, faculty, administrators and students at Iraqi universities:

- The Faculty Advisory Committee on Technology (FACT) is consulting on upgrade options and kept up to date on all plans.
- Faculty members from each division volunteered to serve as Blackboard mentors for their division.

- A permanent LMS project team will work on all migration plans and implementation. This multi-disciplinary team meets regularly to address migration issues, and to keep the Training Services informed on how to best help users.
- Pilot environments will use for testing for the new distance education tools.
- Ongoing migration training workshops will be provided to train the faculties and students.
- Blackboard fast-track and Blackboard Essential workshops will be provided to foster the migration process.
  - To allow and encourage this change, issues and problems are addressed in the migration pilots and have been addressed on an ongoing basis to the best solutions for the majority of users.
  - In implementing this change; tremendous amount of project hours will be spend by IT and training staff.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of the link between the traditional styles of Higher education and the new attitude on distance education should be taken into consideration. Iraqi universities supposed to be working hard to support the transitional issues of moving from traditional education to distance education by using its tools such as Web-CT or Blackboard.

Being an indispensable system of improving higher education, the issues of quality assurance have been associated with independence, self-management and transparency of administrative, financial and social responsibility of universities. The contribution of quality assurance to every aspect of university academic performance implies a comprehensive reform and change; a task that might face considerable resistance and, sometimes, a great deal of refusal. For this reason, leaders of higher education institutions in the developing countries should rethink to take some innovative steps in respect of applying a change that corresponds to developing universities. The challenges facing the universities in the developing countries to achieve quality in higher education through implementing the distance education system are quite substantial.

## References

- Christensen, C., Eyring, H. (2011). *The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from Inside Out*. San Francisco, CA : Jossey- Bass.
- Cott, N. F. (1987). *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Council For Higher Education Accreditation (2012). *Committing to Quality Guidelines for Assessment and Accountability in Higher Education. New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability*. Retrieved from [http://www.chea.org/alliance\\_publications/committing%20to%20quality-3rd%20edition.pdf](http://www.chea.org/alliance_publications/committing%20to%20quality-3rd%20edition.pdf).
- Duran, J. (1998). *Philosophies of science/feminist theories*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Huerta, M. (2007). Administrative Council Meeting. Klassen, D. Director of Distance Education, personal communication on July 20, 2009.
- Moi, T. (2000). *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*. Retrieved July, 12, 2009, from: <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199276226.do>
- Mourkogiannis (2005). *Moral purpose*. Retrieved July, 12, 2009, from: [http://www.12manage.com/methods\\_mourkogiannis\\_moral\\_purpose.html](http://www.12manage.com/methods_mourkogiannis_moral_purpose.html)

- Nworie, J. (2012). Applying Leadership Theories to Distance Education Leadership. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume XV, Number V, Winter 2012 University of West Georgia, Distance Education Center.*
- Showalter, Elaine. 'Toward a Feminist Poetics: Women's Writing and Writing About Women' in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (Random House,1988).
- Smith, J. (2001). Karl Marx. Retrieved July, 10, 2009, from: <http://www.6sociologists.20m.com/marx.html>
- Ormand. B. Director of Information Communication Technology, personal communication, July 18, 2009