The National Center for eLearning & Distance Learning (NCEL)

eLearning Center of Excellence - The Path Towards Excellence in Higher Education

Introduction

The educational process is based on three pillars: teachers, educational content and learners. Saudi Arabia’s National Center for eLearning and Distance Education (NCEL) has the main task of refining these three pillars in order to stimulate cultural advancement, starting with higher education, and instill the importance of learning as a general cultural principle for the various members of the community.

Many universities have invested in establishing costly digital repositories, where their users can store contents, and which even allow for the reuse of this content by the same university users. However, the sharing of this content among all the university’s repositories was not possible.

Many universities have also individually invested on developing new learning content. However, such individual efforts have led to the development of redundant contents that have many topics in common or are duplicates.

In addition, there are also some new universities, which do not yet have a budget that allows them to establish their own repositories or develop their own eLearning content.

Based on these emerging needs, NCEL has the objective of designing learning tools and services to achieve the grand cultural goals for higher education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
Solution

**MAKN AZ** – the Saudi Repository for Digital Learning Objects is an electronic environment, which provides support to higher education institutions. It aims to enrich curriculum and the learning objects of digital courses through the storage, retrieval and reuse of educational modules, which have been designed according to the latest international standards.

Furthermore, the **MAKN AZ** project aims to encourage specialists to participate by adding new units, or developing former ones, and to extend its activities to the existing participating universities in Saudi Arabia, as well as the external community, both in Saudi Arabia and internationally.

The online repository, based on HarvestRoad Hive, offers both Arabic and English interface and has been designed to protect the cultural sensitivities of its target audiences, taking into consideration the need to fit within the Islamic culture and values.

**MAKN AZ** is equipped with an integrated Learning Content Management System, **eXact LCMS**, which makes it easy for professional production lines to develop, publish and maintain content. **MAKN AZ** is integrated with JUSUR, the Learning Management System (LMS) that was developed by **NCEL**, as well as other well-known Learning Management Systems, such as Moodle, Sakai and Blackboard. Integration with other LMSs allows users to publish their work in **MAKN AZ** and have the same material visible and accessible through all the integrated LMSs.

**Achievements**

By using the latest technology, **NCEL** is able to concentrate on the educational content framework design, as well as facilitating mechanisms for electronic access, and methods of interaction. This results in the comprehensive enrichment and integration of the various components of the educational material.

Students can make use of **MAKN AZ** to freely access a diverse range of scholarly material that they require, providing a new, cost-free resource that is highly accessible. **NCEL** foresees a future, in which the educational electronic infrastructure would spread over all parts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, widening the umbrella of formal and non-formal education to cover all citizens, teachers and learners.

Most faculty members publish their academic work to contribute to the theoretical development of their respective disciplines. This is also a means of achieving professional recognition and career advancement. The specific needs of faculty members in Saudi Arabia are adequately addressed by **MAKN AZ**, as it provides the widest possible dissemination of each scholarly work. Aside from publishing work by faculty members, **MAKN AZ** also serves as a gateway to access various materials that they can use in classroom teaching.

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**About **NCEL**

The Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, has issued a decree to establish a national plan for the utilization of information technology. The plan recommends the implementation of eLearning and distance learning and all their prospective applications in higher education. Moreover, this National Center was to provide technical support as well as the tools and means necessary for the development of eLearning content.

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**About **UKS**

Universal Knowledge Solutions (UKS) is the Middle East’s leading learning solutions enabler, with years of experience in the fields of education and training. UKS is a subsidiary of Al Tanmiya Holding, a conglomerate committed to the development of Human Capital in the corporate and academic worlds. UKS is a partner of eXact learning solutions in the Middle East and a reseller of eXact LCMS and HarvestRoad Hive.

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**About **eXact**

**eXact learning solutions**, formerly Giunti Labs, is a leading online and mobile learning content management and digital repository solutions provider, offering a wide range of tools and services for content development, management and delivery, covering:

- Multi-language bespoke learning content production
- Content management and digital repository platforms
- Mobile learning technologies
- Consulting and professional services

The company has over fifteen years of experience and more than 100 clients worldwide. Our technological innovations allow enterprises to improve their organizational performance, and achieve significant reductions in business costs.

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