Developing Social Communication Skills in Saudi Arabian Female University Students using Forum Software for Collaborative E-Learning

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ABSTRACT

Many female students use social communications as a part of their *digital literacy.* There is no doubt that social communication skills, along with mental abilities – represent efficiency and effectiveness among university youth. Any defect in these communication skills may lead to an inability to adapt to the university environment. Consequently, students may lose many opportunities, and suffer academic progress. The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of *collaborative E- learning* in developing social communication skills in the "Research Seminars " course among students of the seventh level of the College of Education at King Khalid University -Abha city - Saudi Arabia. The study followed the semi-experimental approach, which is the design of pre-measurement and post-measurement for two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group uses the *collaborative learning* method of network through the course forums to activate social communication with the pre and post application of the search tool on the two research groups. The researchers applied the tool (social communication scale) on a sample consisting of (25) students from the College of Education. The result confirmed the effectiveness of *collaborative E-learning* in developing the social communication skills of the experimental group. The study recommends, based on its results, to take advantage of the *collaborative -networked learning* method to develop innovative thinking skills among university students. as well, it is necessary to hold training courses for university faculty members to develop their skills in the use of online *collaborative learning* tools such as blogs and discussion forums in the educational process. Moreover, there is a necessity to educate faculty members about the importance of *collaborative -networked learning* method in developing social communication among university students.

KEY WORDS: EFFECTIVENESS - COLLABORATIVE -E- LEARNING - SOCIAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

INTRODUCTION

The E-learning has become an entry and starting point for the strategic development of the educational process and educational institutions. A new concept emerged based on scientific and theoretical foundations related to e-learning such as virtualization, networking. They used various web technologies and tools to provide a *collaborative electronic learning* environment of a social nature that increases the effectiveness of social communication between teachers and students. Social media have become an indispensable necessity in our life and in addition to meeting the need for communication, some students have begun social media intensive use in order to meet their psychological, social and academic needs, (Ozad & Uygarer 2014., Pokrovskaia, Leontyeva, Ababkova, Cappelli, D'Ascenzo, 2021).

E-learning is applied to a group of learners in a collective collaborative manner called the " *collaborative E-learning* style". These collaborative *E-learning environments* contributed to improving individuals 'awareness of their self-efficacy and their research skills within the framework of effective social interaction and communication with others. Social media has changed the learning path in higher education, as many students reported that social media is useful and beneficial in their studies and motivates them to cooperate and interact with others through these sites, (Zaitoun.2005, Arshad, Akram, Arshad & Nazir 2014, Lacka ,Wong, Haddoud.2021).

Downes (2012) also showed that the social and participatory feature is the hallmark of collaborative e- learning based on Web 2 tools. In the past few years, there has been an increase in the use of computer networks in education and training, but despite this, the *e-learning* or virtual learning environments do not include any systematic collaborative. However, the ideas of computer-aided collaborative learning have been increasingly applied in different methods of Internet-enabled learning. They usually include capabilities for documents sharing and a variety of specific tools for communication and networking via the network where synchronous communication tools such as chatting, dialogue, voicemail and video conferencing can be used. Asynchronous communication tools such as discussion forums also indicate that the use of collaborative learning through the Internet and computers will further enhance and expand methods of interaction and communication between students and teachers, leading to the development of educational practices and support for students at the level of learning and interaction, (Hamada and Ismail 2014) (Quintana and Osuna 2020).

In light of the above, the researcher considered the necessity to encourage interaction between students in the networked collaborative learning groups, and to provide appropriate support and conditions that help them increase effective social communication. This is the researcher's starting point in studying the effectiveness of *collaborative networking* in developing social communication among students of the College of Education for Girls at King Khalid University Abha KSA.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Subject and study design: The purpose of this study was to answer these questions regarding *E-Learning* and *collaborative digital communications*. All participants were given a survey (document included) to complete prior to attending the Research Course weekly meeting which was conducted for a period of 16 weeks (academic semester), and all completed an exit survey at the end of the term. The study community consisted of female students from the College of Education at King Khalid University. The research sample consisted of (50) undergraduate female students in the, Research Seminars course at the College of Education in Abha at King Khalid

University. The participants were divided into two groups of (25) each. The experimental group received 2 hours of weekly online instruction via Blackboard Forum Software. The control group received 2 hours of weekly traditional classroom instruction.

Collaborative e-learning does not achieve the effectiveness of interaction by simply placing students in groups and assigning them to learning tasks, as it is required to study the variables related to the environment of interaction and collaborative learning itself, which are related to strategies, tools, levels and types of interaction, to reach the best conditions under which interaction and collaborative learning achieve its maximum effectiveness. Through her experience in academic education, the researcher found that there is an urgent need to identify the effectiveness of e-learning in its part on network sharing through its effect on developing the social communication skills of Education College students at King Khalid University via the Internet in the blackboard system with e-learning.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the question that states, "What is the effectiveness of *online collaborative learning* in developing social communication skills among students of the College of Education at King Khalid University?" To answer this essential question a test will be conducted on the validity of the two following hypotheses the first of which states that "There is a statistically significant difference between the pre and post measurement of the experimental group on the social media scale in favor of the post measurement". While the second hypothesis states,

"There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups on the social communication scale (in the course forums after using the *collaborative learning* method in the network) in the post-measurement for the benefit of the experimental group." The quasi-experimental approach was used, which is the design of the pre- and post-measurement for two groups, the experimental group, and the control group. The experimental group uses the collaborative network learning method through the course forums to activate social communication with the pre and post application of the two research tools on the two research groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study intended to determine the effectiveness of *collaborative E- learning* in developing social communication skills The arithmetic average scores of the experimental group in the pre and post measurements were compared on this scale as an overall score. The following table illustrates the findings related to this assumption:

It is evident from the data in Table (1) that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre and post measurement of the experimental group on the social media scale, where the value of "T" was (25.82) at a level

of significance (0.01), in favor of the post measurement. This result can be interpreted as that the improvement and change of the members of the experimental group for the better is attributed to the use of the *collaborative learning* method in the network through scientific

discussion forums in the course on the blackboard system. It contributed to supporting communication and interaction among them and to developing the spirit of cooperation, and thus supporting positive trends towards *collaborative learning* environments via the Internet in raising their level of social interaction.

Table 1. Shows the significance of the difference between the pre and post measurement of the experimental group on the social communication scale

Comparison group	Number	Average	Standard deviation	T value	Significance level
Pre	25	26.84	4.20	25.82	significant at 0.01
Post	25	52.72	3.63		

Table 2. illustrates the significance of the difference between the experimental and control groups on the social media scale after completing the networked participatory learning method

Comparison group	Number	Average	Standard deviation	T value	Significance level
Control	25	26.68	6.66	17.167	significant at 0.01
Experimental	25	52.72	3.63		

In fact, the students of the experimental group found in the forums a fertile *electronic learning* environment that helped them to deal with each other in the course of the "Research Seminar". This increased their interaction and social communication in a positive way, which indicates the success of these educational forums in achieving their educational goals, and confirms the effectiveness of network *collaborative learning* in developing the social communication skills of the students of the experimental group in the course of the Research Seminars ". This result is consistent with the studies of (Kabuli, 2013), (Ali, 2016), (Harb, ; Khamis,; Abu Jahjouh . 2013), and (Al-Dukhani, ; Faraj, Khamis,. 2015), (Al-Muaither and Abdullah 2020) in that the use of collaborative networking led to social communication in a large and effective manner among the members of the research sample.

It is evident from the data of Table (2) that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups of experimental and control research on the scale of social communication after the completion of the use of the collaborative learning method in the network in the total score where the value of "T" is (017.167) in favor of the experimental group. This indicate the students of the experimental group, as indicated by the statistical evidence shown in Table (2), have benefited from the use of the collaborative online learning method in communication and social interaction in the course of the " Research Seminars ", which confirms the effectiveness of *collaborative online learning* in developing social communication skills in the course of the " Research Seminar " Seventh-level students at the College of Education at King Khalid University.

This result is in consistent with the findings of the study of Ali (2016), aimed at measuring the effect of some social *e-learning* environments based on social media platforms on developing educational electronic communication skills among students of the College of Education at Al-Baha University. there were statistically significant differences between the arithmetic average scores of the three research groups in the post application of the observation card in favor of the two experimental groups.

The study of Alsurehi & Youbi (2014) sought identifying and studying the factors that influence students' academic performance using SNSs. Suggested factors affecting student performance are interactions with colleagues, interactions with teachers, participation, and cooperative learning. The primary research goal of this case study is to determine the factors that affect students' academic performance while using SNSs. The results indicate that *SNSs* has a significant positive effect on interactions with colleagues, interactions with teachers, participation, *collaborative learning*, and student performance. In addition, interactions with peers and educators while using SNSs simplify communication between students and educators, which leads to enhanced collaboration, knowledge exchange, improvement, and development of the learning process, and provides many learning opportunities.

Abu Jahjouh's study (2020) investigated the impact of the *e-social learning* strategy on the development of scientific achievement, the development of the skill of scientific communication, the development of positive

trends towards learning based on social media, and the detection of the relationship between the three dependent variables. There is no statistically significant difference between the arithmetic average scores of trends and scientific communication due to the GPA variable.

Al-Muaither (2020) has identified the impact of the Edmodo social learning network environment on developing cognitive achievement and dialogue skills among the students of the College of Education in a course based on s*ocial constructive learning* in projects. The results revealed an impact of the e-learning environment integrated through the Edmodo network on developing dialogue and communication among students. which proved that social communication among students leads to enhancing their learning.

CONCLUSION

In this study, there was an effectiveness of using the *collaborative E-learning* in developing the social communication skills of the experimental group compared to the control group, which led to enhancing their learning of the subject Moreover, there is a statistically significant relationship between using the collaborative -E learning and developing the social communication skills. Therefore, it is important to encourage university students to have self-confidence in their abilities and capabilities to implement scientific research steps with skill and accuracy, as well as supporting the method of *collaborative E- learning* in teaching courses to achieve high quality learning outcomes.

Conflict of Interest: Author declares no conflicts of interests to disclose.

Ethical Clearance Statement: The Current Research Work Was Ethically Approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia.

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