Development of Online Learning in Jordanian Higher Education Institutions: Challenges, Opportunities, and Achievements

Dr. Nouh Alhindawi
Directorate Of Information Technology & E-transformation

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Amman - Jordan

Introduction

Higher Education in Jordan

74

Universities & Colleges

10 Public Universities	**16** Private Universities	**02** Special Status Universities	**01** Regional University	**45** Community & Technical Colleges

Introduction

Students

Teaching Staff

| S. Enrolled in Universities | 335,337 |

Total Teaching Staff **11,400**

| S. Enrolled in Comm. & Tech. Colleges | 56,500 |

Administrative Staff

18,895

| Foreign Students From (109) Countries | 56,779 |

Stages of development of e-learning in Jordan

Stage 1

- 2015, Allow HEIs to introduce e-learning into their academic programs, at a rate of no more than 25% of the programs
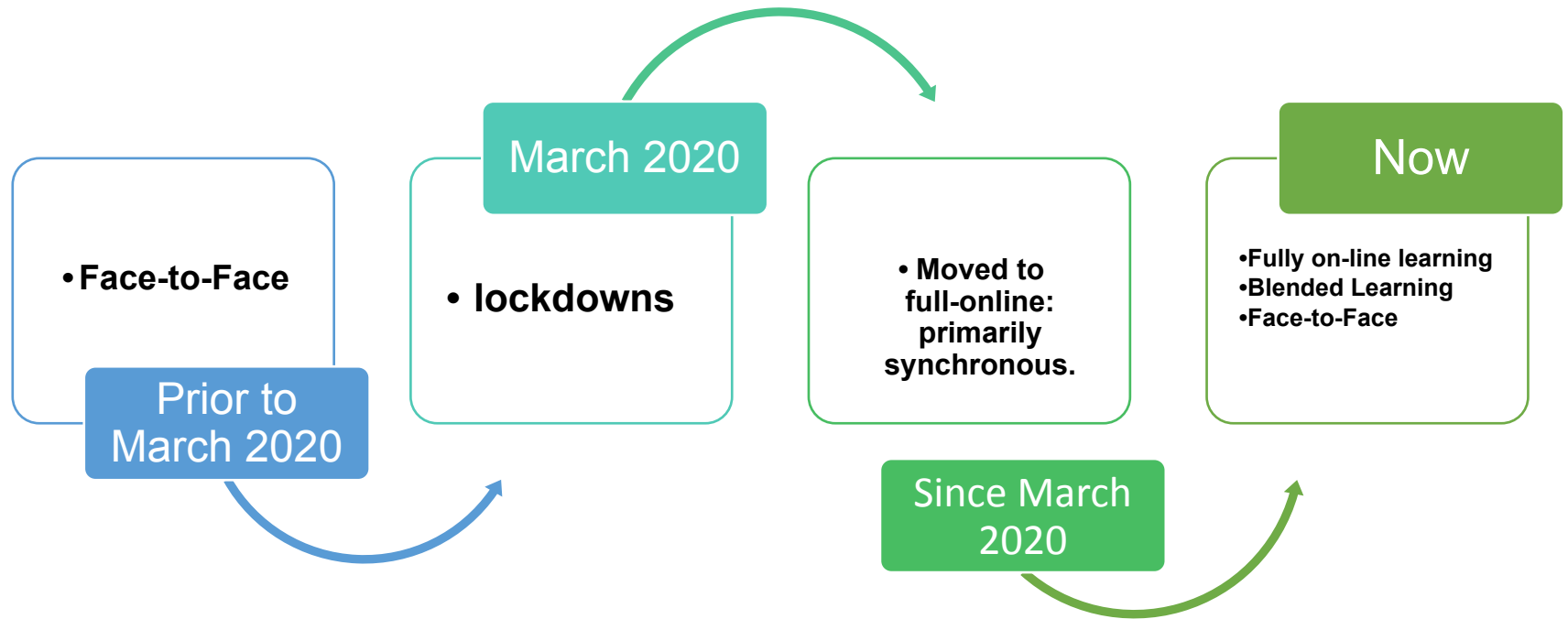
Stage 2

- Upgrade technological infrastructure and tools and promote the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs).

Stage 3

- Transit to digital education in the HE sector (due to Covid-19 pandemic)
- **Formation of three specialized committees**, to evaluate the experience of distance learning.
- **Nationwide action plan**

E-learning Development

Prior to March 2020
- **Face-to-Face**

March 2020
- **lockdowns**

Since March 2020
- **Moved to full-online: primarily synchronous.**

Now
- Fully on-line learning
- Blended Learning
- Face-to-Face

E-learning Development

- The spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) imposed unprecedented challenges on communities.

- Those challenges were not limited to the healthcare sector and population wellbeing, but also had grave economic, social, and educational implications.

- Jordan as a country attempted to convert challenges into **opportunities that promote adaptation and collaboration, and boost resilience and recovery.**

E-learning Development

- Universities rapidly mobilized available resources to maintain business and learning continuity.

- The extent of those resources varied from one university to the next, with large numbers of students further complicating the effort.

What would normally have taken months to accomplish, took place in a matter of days.

E-learning Development

- Since the onset of the lockdown and the closure of all University campuses on March 17, the Council of Higher Education took a number of measures to support and organize online learning.

- For following up the Jordanian universities, the Ministry requested all higher education institutions to submit their plans and technology readiness reports that include capacity building for teaching staff.

- Furthermore, the Ministry launched several initiatives that support the development of the skills required for online learning.

E-learning Development

- The Higher Education Council has formed three specialized committees comprising

- The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI) published regulations and accreditation guidelines for distance learning and blended learning

- Distance learning "should not be considered as a replacement of face-to-face and on-campus interaction", but is rather an important component for higher education, and a tool to improve universities' competitiveness in regard to cultivating an "innovative educational environment".

- The Council of Higher Education took a number of measures to support and organize distance learning

- The ministry requested all higher education institutions to submit their plans and technology readiness reports that include capacity building for teaching staff

The review of **current distance learning practices** in Jordanian Universities indicates that:

- The software and platforms required for distance learning are available in most universities. The majority of universities use services that provide reliable video conferencing.
- Since the onset of the lockdown, a large portion of universities have digitized some of their courses and continued with that effort until most courses were offered using distance learning.
- Per available statistics, most universities use multiple technologies to interact with learners including synchronous and asynchronous teaching.
- Universities in most cases use open-source platforms for their Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle, Google classroom and others. Surveys show that faculty members prefer interactive sessions with their learners using Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

National Center of E-Learning and Open Educational Resources

- National Center of E-Learning and Open Educational Resources (OER) is an emergent in the MoHSER intended to plan and apply online learning experiment among private and public universities in Jordan.

- Provide online material through a platform to be shared for **teaching** and **learning processes** among staff and students.

- Main objects :

   1. Enhance the skills of universities in administering and building online courses,

   2. Support lifelong learning

   3. Cross-border collaboration.

Open Learning Resources (OER)

- Vision

  - Partnership with Jordanian higher education institutions by creating an interactive technological environment that helps integrate higher education into the space world of knowledge.

- Mission

  - Providing infrastructure and qualifying human resources capable of integrating modern technology into the educational process with scientific foundations and methods in higher education institutions.

Action Plan for Embedding Online Learning (Full & Blended) in the Higher Education System

- **Main Goals of the Plan:**

1. Ensuring that the vision, mission, procedures and processes of online learning in HE institutions are contextualized and coordinated according to an organized and structured paradigm adopted and adhered to by all.

2. Providing various forms and modes of online learning for HE institutions to use in both ordinary and extraordinary times.

3. Proposing methods of assessment of students' performance which are more relevant, precise, and conducive to successful online learning.

4. Identifying the necessary technical infrastructure requirements which HE institutions need to have in order to offer effective online learning.

Action Plan for Embedding Online Learning (Full & Blended) in the Higher Education System

5. Proposing the necessary structural changes in curricula, study plans, and strategies of learning for all courses to enable effective learning to materialize.

6. Suggesting the necessary trainings for faculty members and the relevant personnel, as well as ample orientation for students.

7. Identifying the necessary components of governance for managing, monitoring, assessing, and developing online learning to ensure that it is embedded in the teaching/learning processes.

8. Managing the timeline for the implementation of the plan, including initial orientation, follow-up, monitoring, and assessment.

Capacity building training workshops

1
- E-learning (integrated/connected) in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Dec, 2018).

2
- Instructional Design for E-Learning (IDEL) Training Course in Higher Education Institutions in Jordan in cooperation with (UNHCR) (Dec, 2019).

3
- Developing a guideline for designing educational material online in cooperation with "Edraak", an initiatives of Queen Rania Foundation (April, 2020)

Capacity building training workshops

4,5,6

- Training program for early career academics in Jordanian universities in cooperation with the British Council and in coordination with experts from the United Kingdom:
  - Experiential Digital Pedagogies (Feb, 2021).
  - Preparedness and Curriculum Design for Online Courses (Mar, 2021).
  - Online Assessments (Mar, 2021).

7

- A dialogue session (Policy Dialogue) entitled "Learning and E-Learning Dialogue - Aspiration and Future Thinking" in cooperation with the British Council (Jun, 2021).

Capacity building training workshops

| 8 | • (Digital Experiential Teaching and Learning) on electronic and blended learning in cooperation with the British Council (Aug, 2021 - Sep,2021). |

| 9,10 | • : Instructional design and effective e-learning" in cooperation with the Queen Rania Academy for Teacher Training (Sep. 2021 – Oct. 2021)
• Effective E-Learning Design
• Leading an effective e-learning environment |

| 11,12 | • Building National Capacities to develop e-learning in Higher Education Institutions within the executive action plan for integrating e-learning:
• Basic level: of the national capacity building for the development of e-learning in higher education institutions, this level was implemented (Mar, 2021 – Apr,2021).
• Advance level : the designing of interactive e- courses, presented by experts from the Connected Learning in Crises Consortium UNHCR (Dec, 2021) |

Future Plan

Phase 1

- With the support of UNHCR: Building a core team on designing of their online courses using an inclusive framework.

Phase2

- The core team will begin producing 1-2 courses (Arabic& English) that will be uploaded on the MOHE platform to be used by all universities. The team will begin also recording the needed videos in the established Studio within the MOHE premises.
- Core team will begin training and helping other members in their universities to begin creating their own materials.

Phase 3

- MOHE , UNHCR & the Connected Learning in Crises Consortium will begin creating a pool of IDEL expertise it aim to identify Jordan as a hub of experts for the whole MENA region.

- **The MOHE will keep on building partnerships with different partners inside and outside Jordan in order to:**

1. Strengthen the MOHE platform and its features
2. Provide Jordanian academic institution with access to different well known, prestigious universities outside Jordan.
3. Provide capacity building trainings for different MOHE & universities staff on different online learning approaches.
4. Creating an inclusive online approach to make sure that all students can have access to HE.

Thanks a lot

Dr. Nouh Alhindawi

Directorate Of Information Technology & E-transformation

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Amman - Jordan