E-learning as Strategy for Philanthropic Organization Focused on Educational Purposes in Thailand

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ABSTRACT—*The objectives of this study were: (1) To elaborate an eLearning framework integrated into donor's activities which can fit with philanthropic organization strategies (2) To assess the eLearning framework upon feedback and suggestions provided by donors, recipients, philanthropic organizations, and philanthropic experts (3) To assess opinions of donors and philanthropic organizations running in Thailand toward the framework.*

The population for the study consisted of 3 schools in the North East of Thailand, a region called Isaan. The schools were located in the villages of Kudbong, Nadee, and Serm. The sample units included 279 students aged from 13 to 18 years old, 116 donors mainly in Europe and USA who are supporting pupils mainly in Asia, 24 philanthropic organizations which are operating in Thailand, and 10 experts in philanthropy located in Europe.

The data collection instruments were: paper-based questionnaires in Thai language for Thai students and web-based questionnaires in English for donors, philanthropic organizations and experts. The data were analyzed using the statistical analysis package called PSPP and its built-in features to identify cross tabulations, statistics, and reliability test (Alpha Cronbach).

The findings were as follows: (1) On the development of an eLearning as a strategy for philanthropic organization focused on educational purposes in Thailand, it was found that the model fits with on-going trends such as student needs, donor's mindset and shift from money to time, and philanthropic organizations objectives. The outcomes were specific key components were identified to build an effective and comprehensive eLearning framework as follow (a) social network (b) code of conduct (c) educational goals and motives (d) culture (e) modus operandi (f) eLearning technologies (g) composite capability score computed with Internet and Giving capabilities (2) Based on quantitative data and qualitative feedback, as well as opinions and suggestions from students, donors, organizations, and experts, the model was fine-tuned and updated accordingly (3) On the measuring of opinion of experts and philanthropic organizations in Thailand toward the model the findings were conclusive concerning the benefits of eLearning as a strategy for philanthropic organization focused on educational purposes.

Keywords— Donors, eLearning, Isaan, Philanthropy, Thailand

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1. BACKGROUND

The idea of this research popped-up in the researcher's minds when the researcher was volunteering in the North-East of Thailand to teach English for rural students in a low-income province. After two months, a group of volunteers was created on the social network LinkedIn to glue overseas volunteers to improve English knowledge of Thai students through a free-available videoconference platform, Skype. To ensure a sense of quality, by including time and cultural constraints, a strict process was created to define the steps to be validated and then adopted by the volunteers. Although this shortest experience was successful in a short-term, it is necessary to understand the overall picture.

Since thousands years humans help humans and humans contribute to a better humanity. Today philanthropic organizations are still pursuing their efforts to increase human welfare through a conventional approach: fund raising. Mainly due to financial crisis, i.e. subprime, public debts, flows of money are rarefying drastically and the philanthropy arena recurrently needs a wad of cash to run its strategy as well as any for-profit organization (Raymond, 2004). Furthermore, the main philanthropic process is the same for many decades. A donor gives money to an organization and then the organization spends an amount of this money to educate a student at the end of the chain. The money fuels the process and logically the process stops when it is not fueled enough.

2. OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the study were to investigate and analyze the potential of eLearning as part of philanthropy's strategy to eventually reengineer the model by replacing money with giving-time donation and finally to elaborate an eLearning framework integrated into donor's activities which can fit with philanthropic organization strategies in Thailand.

3. RESEARCH MATERIALS

The current state of research methodologies applied for non-profit and philanthropic organizations is frequently concomitant with philanthropic research centers created by universities, which have a rich tradition, and prime philanthropy worldwide organizations. However, the research mixed quantitative and qualitative data.

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A strict methodology was applied and followed by adopting various prototype phases to assess the research materials; i.e. five prototypes were developed for the student form before the final version was finally approved, including parallel translation (English vs. Thai).

The data collection instruments were: paper-based questionnaires in Thai language for Thai students and web-based questionnaires in English for donors, philanthropic organizations and experts. The data were analyzed using the statistical analysis package called PSPP and its built-in features to identify cross tabulations, statistics, and reliability test under the Alpha Cronbach; the data returned 0.83 which is a fair value (frequently admitted the alpha has to be greater than 0.70, and frequently admitted the alpha closed to 0.9 is a good value).

4. RESULTS

Results shown philanthropic organizations are still reluctant to consider on-line interactions and eLearning capabilities as viable options to educate their sponsored students. By extrapolating that type of resistance on eLearning from philanthropic organizations in a different context, the job market, this research corroborates findings from Adams and DeFleur indicating that employers prefer traditional degree programs to online degree programs (Adams & Defleur, 2006); however, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) were stammering and less structured last century; the 21st century trends show that disruptive technologies are surely and profoundly changing education, as well as philanthropy, and then associated mentalities for the next decades (Boyce, 2013; Stepan, 2013). In a comparison, a study proposes MOOCs have reduced access because they reduce person-to-person contact (Garrett, Allala, Garrett, & Allala, 2013). By not considering MOOCs as a complementary educational resource, it is a unilateral finding. Indeed, MOOC's could not be fully used as a substitute or as a panacea; because they are not the ultimate way to deliver educational contents. However, as stated earlier that donors could initiate philanthropic crowdsourcing, another study suggests crowdsourcing could assess MOOCs (Clougherty Jr & Popova, 2013).

Cultural and behavioral attributes are always needed in any relationship worldwide. It is the underlying definition of the known-word governance practically converted into a code of conduct which covers ethics and morality. That code of conduct helps philanthropic organizations either to define boundaries between students and donors or to legally act in case of non-appliance. The study disclosed philanthropic organizations have fears to connect donors and students, not based on life experiences, but often based on speculations; "what if" is a wider interpretation of likely facts rather than facts only. Surprisingly results shown 49,82% of Thai students in needs would accept to give money to get help when 83,30% of organizations would not accept their student to get money to get help. In that case, it shows strong antinomies how to define philanthropy and to get common appreciations on final philanthropic objectives. The study raised an attention-grabbing paradigm: 20,70% of donors would accept money in case of giving help. In contrast, experts logically stated it clear, 100% were not in favor to include any money at all within philanthropic processes. This gap is a wake-up call for philanthropic organization to clarify the relationship between a donor and a student, at the beginning of a sponsoring relationship, by cautiously gauging this explicit financial criterion. Philanthropic organizations must clearly define whether money enters into the relationship equation. The cost-sharing of pupils' education should be considered by philanthropic organizations. Indeed, the cost-sharing concern are covered by researches which raised the question to evaluate the effectiveness of cost-sharing in higher education (D. B. Johnstone, 2004; Teixeira, 2006; Woodhall, 2002). In the arena of philanthropy, a significant causal effect could be found from where the students and the donor are coming from. Indeed, the country and related cultural behaviors are influencing the financial criterion, acceptance vs. rejection, through neurobiology and social decisions-making considerations (Rilling, King-Casas, & Sanfey, 2008; Sanfey, 2007). Another resistance from philanthropic organizations comes from how to fairly define a relationship between a donor and a student (McClintock & Allison, 1989). Evidently, involved participants and groups expressed their desire to network together, students, donors and experts, but this aspiration was considerably minimized by philanthropic organizations in this study while researches encourage the approach (Perlstein, 2011; Saxton, Guo, & Brown, 2007) and while donors want to get further values and controls (Ostrander, 2007).

Objectively, coming sponsored students generations are ahead of social network usage (91,03% use one social network while 32,97% use two social network) compared to philanthropic organizations today (100% are using one social network only) . The consequences of the Internet penetration have important effects: 1) social classes or social barriers are becoming more porous and allow different social classes to communicate worldwide 2) social network can connect people who want to get and give help i.e. donors and students 2) students are constantly plugged, aware of what are doing peers, classmates, and so on 3) students are using social network on a daily basis 4) the best communication channel to attract them on the board of philanthropy --or to be linked with a philanthropic organization-- is apparent and efficient (Apinunmahakul & Devlin, 2008). In a whole aspect, social networks (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009) could play a significant role to reshape the philanthropic realm by connecting individuals and adding built-in features specifically designed for philanthropy i.e. search capabilities based on topics/country, user's status (I need help, I help) activation, etc.

Despite these strong wishes to be connected, the study revealed there is no website or a social network where both worlds can clearly meet, a place where a student can request and get help from people who have time to give whenever and wherever in the world. However, donors and students are willing to find their own peaceful educational environment by accepting a *modus operandi* and adequate behaviors which fit with their prerogatives (week day vs. week-end, time, duration, time zone constraints, etc.).

One of the findings is quiet surprising why philanthropic organizations do not use existing free eLearning technologies as a lever to educate their sponsored students. The motives behind are human beings only: lack of information technology understanding, lack of awareness about eLearning capabilities, either the shyness or a fearful approach to directly engage donors with students, and more globally a timid willpower to reengineer their own processes by shifting money to time shift (S. Ganesan, Justin Paul, s. d., p. 43-46). By looking the collected quantitative data from donors, it is confirmed 27,6% want to spend time only, a result corroborated by experts at 30%, while philanthropic organizations do not think to get any benefits, or a 0%. Such a gap! Donors want to help by giving time, students want to get help by using their time, but dots are not connected! The resistance is one of the limitations of this study to understand why philanthropic organizations do not use eLearning. From a semantic point of view, a hierarchy cannot exist in philanthropy because involved organizations are following the same noble cause, but at the same time, the word noble defines aristocracy too. Unhappily, the size or the capability of a philanthropic organization depends on its amount of money allowed to education. More money the organization has better the level in the philanthropic hierarchy is. It is biased, worse it is an illusion, because a limited funded philanthropic organization can also provide educational services without investing a large amount of money. Whatever the cash available, any philanthropic organizations can achieve their goals by integrating eLearning in their educational strategy.

Expressed patterns from educational goals and motives articulated in the study are to be cautiously taken into deliberation because they are often coercive due to external influences which are essentially impacting donors: prestige (Harbaugh, 1998), direct personal benefits (Jr, 1982), and governmental policies (Ball, 2008) i.e. tax. However, despite donors are wishing successful educational and professional careers to sponsored pupils, their original goals and motives are undisclosed (Schervish, 2005), but are linked with complexities of ability, even spirituality.

Unpredictably, the study publicized a different angle of philanthropy, a further step from donors, by offering their social network to find a job to sponsored pupils. It is an unexpected winning cooperation. Without the intention to be overoptimistic, it is pretty coherent from a traditional educational process: be educated… to find a job.

5. E-LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Finally, key components were identified as follow to build an effective eLearning framework as a strategy for philanthropic organization focused on educational purposes: (a) Code of conduct – governance (b) social network (c) educational goals and motives (d) culture (e) modus operandi (f) eLearning technologies (g) composite capability score computed with Internet and Giving capabilities.
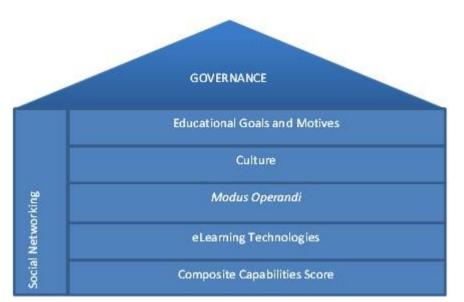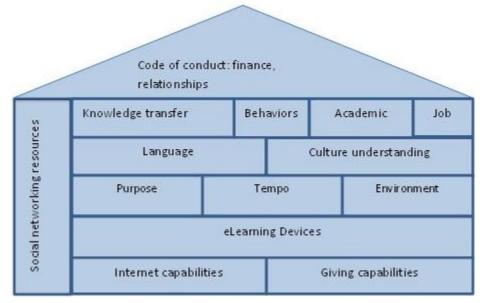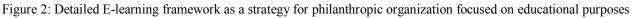
Figure 1: E-learning framework as a strategy for philanthropic organization focused on educational purposes

A detailed framework can be elaborated to describe key sections, criteria, and tasks:

Figure 2: Detailed E-learning framework as a strategy for philanthropic organization focused on educational purposes

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eLearning framework was presented in details to the involved philanthropic organizations and received positive appraisal. Indeed, the eLearning framework reposes on existing free tools, often used by everyone on a daily basis, and it does not reinvent the wheel i.e. necessity to develop or to create costly tools. As mentioned by few philanthropic organizations, the implementation of that framework does not require additional human and financial resources.

Backing to the fundamentals, the roles of philanthropic organizations are to glue donors and students, not through bank notes only, but through alternatives to achieve one of the main educational objectives: to educate. At the same time, European donors and Thai students strongly validated the desire to be plugged for the same objective: help or get help to be better educated.

A careful consideration has to be made regarding the limitations of this study. The region of Isaan has its own language and its own mentality in Thailand and reflects today the social fracture between the North-East and the capital city of

Thailand, in the light of the recent political events. Therefore, what it is observed in that context might be different in the North-East and not necessarily reflects observations in the North-West, example Chiang Mai, or in the South of Thailand where additional criteria could be used. Isaan students given accurate data based on the initial effort to translate and clearly explain the reasons why this study was on-going. The privilege is to have the right person at the right place; a Thai state teacher helped to get accurate data and the researcher is actively working as a philanthropist in Isaan.

The recommendations are (1) to slowly assess the eLearning framework in different regions in Thailand i.e. North West via philanthropic actors who are actively involved in educational activities (2) start to assess the eLearning framework within different emerging country to determine whether factors and criteria of the eLearning framework are the same, and then to enrich the eLearning framework as part of strategy for philanthropic organizations focused on educational purpose.

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