

Improving Adult Literacy using Information Technology in Lebanon

Summary:

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in American University of Beirut undertook a programme involving the implementation of Computer Aided Learning to impact ICT skills and combat overall illiteracy in Lebanon.

Objectives and Rationale:

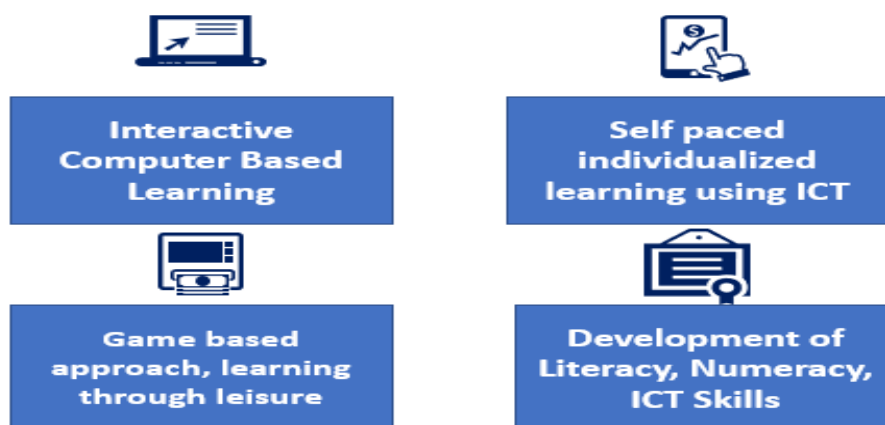
While Lebanon is known to have high literacy rates amongst Arab countries, the objective of the programme was to address the prevalent illiteracy amongst adults in the country through the delivery of ICT skills to them. This was because it was considered that overall literacy includes knowledge of basic usage of ICT, in addition to having basic literacy and numeracy skills

Key Stakeholders:

The program was undertaken by American University of Beirut's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, who worked in tandem with the different adult literacy programmes being undertaken by the NCL-National Committee for Literacy and Adult Education (Ministry of Social Affairs).

Implementation Strategy:

The programme focused on leveraging computer aided learning and ICT for delivery of the programme to the learners. The programme intended to address the shortage of literacy educators in the system by using ICT for enabling greater coverage. Some of the features included personalized adaptive learning at the learner's individual pace, provision of digital literacy in addition to basic numeracy and literacy.



Resource Utilization:

The programme delivery was through ICT systems, with programme management being undertaken by the American University of Beirut.

Impact:

The project provided an opportunity to the adult beneficiaries to gain ICT skills apart from gaining basic literacy and numeracy. However, a crucial finding was that ICT cannot entirely replace human adult educators and hence, Computer Aided Learning and ICT can be used as an enabler to supplement human pedagogy

Key Challenges and Lessons Learnt:

The programme was well received by the National Committee for Literacy. However, the programme experienced resistance from external stakeholders, including adult literacy educators, who felt that usage of ICT enabled systems could pose a threat to their job security. It was also realized that for greater effectiveness of usage of ICT or Computer Aided Learning for delivery, presence of adult educators and their pedagogical techniques were crucial. This indicated that technology can only be used as an enabler for imparting literacy and not as the sole replacement for human pedagogy

Replicability and Sustainability:

The objective of the programme was to scale the project to other Arab countries. Critical success factors for scalability include availability of funding as well as stakeholder acceptance and consensus.