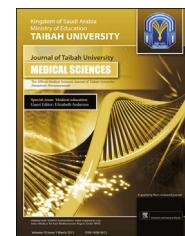




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Educational Article

Utilization of blackboard among undergraduate medical students: Where we are from the reality?



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المخلص

أهداف البحث: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم إدراك طلاب كلية الطب لاستخدام نظم إدارة التعلم باستخدام نظام "بلاك بورد" من حيث الفوائد والصعوبات.

طرق البحث: أجريت هذه الدراسة في كلية الطب، جامعة الملك سعود. وزعت استبانة ذاتية على الطلبة، اشتملت على ثلاثة أجزاء متضمنة المعلومات الديموغرافية، واستخدام نظام بلاك بورد، والصعوبات أثناء استخدامه.

النتائج: وزعت 808 استبانة بمعدل استجابة 42%؛ بين المشاركين 224 (65.7%) من الطلاب و116 (34.3%) من الطالبات. ذكر منهم 78.1% "اختلاف واختلاف قوي" على "جدوى نظام بلاك بورد في التواصل مع المعلم". بينما ذكر 74.1% من الطلبة "اختلاف واختلاف بشدة" بفائدة نظام بلاك بورد في التواصل مع الطلاب الآخرين، في حين أن الغالبية العظمى من الطلبة (71.8%) لم تستخدم الوسائط المتعددة المتوفرة في نظام بلاك بورد. وأيضاً، وافق 61% من الطلبة على أن هناك "نقص التدريب المنهجي" على استخدام نظام بلاك بورد في الكلية، وانفق 37.2% من الطلبة على أن "استخدام نظام بلاك بورد هو مضيعة للوقت". مع ذلك، فإن 39.2% من الطلبة لا يعلمون إن كان نظام بلاك بورد يضيف أي عبء إضافي على الطلبة. وكان اتجاه الخلاف بين الذكور والإناث فيما يتعلق بفوائد وصعوبات نظام بلاك بورد متساوياً تقريباً.

الاستنتاجات: أظهرت نتائج الدراسة عدم الاستخدام الأمثل لميزات التعلم لنظام بلاك بورد. وأن الطلبة يواجهون صعوبات تقنية أثناء استخدامه. كما تشير نتائج

هذه الدراسة إلى الحاجة إلى التدريب الإلزامي للطلبة على أنظمة إدارة التعلم التي أدخلت حديثاً بما فيها نظام بلاك بورد داخل المؤسسة التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بلاك بورد؛ تصورات الطلبة؛ طلاب الطب

Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to evaluate undergraduate medical students' perceptions to Blackboard (Bb) utilization learning management systems in terms of benefits and difficulties.

Methods: The study was conducted at the College of Medicine, King Saud University. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the students. The questionnaire consisted of three parts including demographic information, utilization of Bb and difficulties while using Bb.

Results: A total of 808 questionnaires were distributed with 42% response rate. Among the participants, 224 (65.7%) were male and 116 (34.3%) were female students. Of them, 78.1% reported "disagreement and strong disagreement" on "Bb usefulness in communicating with the instructor". However, 74.1% students reported "disagreed and strongly disagreed" on "Bb usefulness in communicating with other students", whereas majority of the students (71.8%) did not use multimedia available in Bb system. Also, 61% students agreed that there is a "lack of formal training" on the use of Bb in the college, and 37.2% students agreed that the using "Bb system is a time consuming". However, 39.2% students did not know about the Bb systems add any additional burden on the students. The disagreement trend of male and female

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students concerned with the Bb utility and difficulties were almost same.

Conclusion: The finding of the study showed a poor utilization of Bb learning features. Students faced technical difficulties while using Bb. The findings of this study indicate the need of compulsory students training of any newly introduced learning management systems including Bb in the educational institute.

Keywords: Blackboard; Medical students; Students perceptions

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Introduction

Advances in information technology gave rise to multiple-purposes computer assisted educational programs which have transformed the education fundamentally.¹ In the new era of medical education, there is a rapid change towards the web-based learning (WBL) both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels to enhance the effectiveness of educational programs.² The WBL moves either to a re-placement or an adjunct to face-to-face classroom teaching and learning.³ The change toward WBL is due to faculty shortage, space and time limitations, increase in number of students and to encourage the students for self-directed learning.^{4–6} However, cost and technical problems are major concern for its application; it is observed that technology has been used for technology's sake rather than achieving sound educational benefits.⁵

There are different types of WBL systems including, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), Web Course Tools (WebCT) and Blackboard (Bb).^{2,7–9} Bb learning system is a web-based server software that provided virtual learning environment and course management system.⁹ It is available in 12 different languages and more than 12 million users of about 2,200 learning institutions from 60 different countries have been used.⁹ The College of Medicine, King Saud University using dynamic Bb learning management system (version 9.1 service pack 10) that working on Window operating and Java (1.6) based hosting system. Bb is providing various interactive tools for the users. The tools are announcement (this tool enables learners to know the latest news, notifications, and announcements), calendar, tasks (informing the learner what he/she has to do, it also allows them to organize according to the subject or personal visions), grades (this task provided grades obtained in examinations/tests) and user manual (this tool provides list of participating students to know each other). Bb technical standards for online learning applications were maintained and backup by the Deanship of E-learning in the University. They are also responsible to arrange Bb training. Bb is a multimedia curriculum-driven learning

system that provides instructors with control and flexibility.¹⁰ It has many features accessible to instructors and students including course documents, syllabus, hyperlinks and grade book. Moreover, it improves communication through announcements, discussions, virtual classroom and email.^{11,2} Bb enables students to engage in an exciting ways of learning through collaboration and serves to develop and implement technology that improves every aspect of education. The reform of medical education system is a biggest challenge in the medical education. The College of Medicine of the King Saud University, is the first medical college of the Saudi Arabia, which has the responsibly to established modern education system and produced competent doctors. Therefore, College of Medicine undergraduate medical curriculum has been extensively revised for a decade. Since 2008, system based, integrated and reformed curriculum has been applied with different innovative instructional methods to facilitate students' learning in the era of new trends in medical education. Therefore, Bb as a learning management system was an important inclusion in the reformed curriculum. Bb training has been given to the students and faculty at beginning of academic session. As the training is not compulsory, students' attendance is usually poor. Also, students were frequently instructed to visit the Bb system as study materials are uploaded in the system.

It has been reported that opinion and attitudes of the user can affect any technology implementation.¹² Therefore; the effective utilization of the Bb learning system mainly depends on students and faculty members' background, readiness and acceptance of such system. Furthermore, frequently training is an important factor to facilitate maximum utilization. This study aimed to explore the Bb utilization by undergraduate medical students as learning management systems in their learning process. Also, to identify benefit and difficulties of the system faced by students.

Materials and Methods

Study subjects

This study was conducted in the College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to first to third year medical students during the academic year 2011–2012. The covering letter explained the objectives and purpose of the study. The participation of the students was voluntary and responses were guaranteed confidentiality. The study was approved by the College Research Ethical Committee, King Saud University.

Data collection methods

The questionnaire was developed based on extensive literature review results. The questionnaire included three parts namely; demographic information, utilization of blackboard and difficulties when using Bb. Four educational experts reviewed the questionnaire to improve the content and face validity. The first part of questionnaire included demographic characteristics; second part contained fifteen different items about the utilization of blackboard and third

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