

Chapter 8

The Selection and Deployment of System in Gulf Private School: Issues, Challenges, and Lessons Learnt

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The high academic posture of Gulf Private School (GPS) and its outstanding students' performance in the gulf region is a translation of its vision to be the leading school in the region. Technology applications were always viewed by GPS as tools to leverage change and drive continuous improvement, and thus, the utilization of Information Technology applications was weaved into GPS strategy to maintain its high ranking among private schools in terms of the delivery of quality education and the provision of distinguished services to students and parents. This positive attitude to new technologies explains why GPS is always on the lookout for the latest advancements in educational technology aids and tools to support its functions and processes. This case reflects on the ups and downs associated with GPS decision to implement an ERP system with a promise for major business gains that can help GPS to reinstate its position in the leaders' quadrant.

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ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Twenty years since the inauguration of its first branch in the region as a non-profit organization, GPS accomplishments were driven by its vision to be a regional leader in K12 education. In this limited time, GPS went through major expansion to cope with the multiplication of its students that was also paralleled by a substantial increase in the number and types of courses and the number of teachers and administration staff. GPS has also grown in popularity in the region as one of the important education institutes that provide both British and American system and curriculum.

The forward and positive approach by GPS board of directors towards continual improvement and opportunities has led to several wins to celebrate and has helped GPS position itself as a leader among other schools, evidently overtaking some of the prominent schools, which were historically pioneers in this small gulf country. However, the emergence of new technology and Internet applications and the introduction of new western learning models over the past years have meant tougher competition and has resulted in the decline in GPS ranking compared to other organizations who are more technologically oriented.

Today, GPS is credited by two international institutes for its American and British Curriculums-based programs in addition to K12 local program. It has 257—mainly expatriate—teaching and non-teaching staff and 2113 enrolled students.

SETTING THE STAGE

GPS administration had always had a positive attitude towards adoption of new technologies to support education and learning, and they have regularly budgeted for investment in both hardware and software to equip classes and facilities and to serve staff, teachers, and students. In fact, the school had always a specific interest to have technology rich classrooms with smart boards, personal computers, projectors, and educational aids. GPS also prides itself for being a pioneer among other private schools for creating a Local Area Network (LAN) connecting teachers and administration and using a standard operating system environment based on MS Windows and MS office applications. GPS has also had procured different standalone software for the accounting department, human resources department and the library.

Unfortunately, what could have been described as a lavish spending on technology did not include the connectivity of school with students and parents. In addition, GPS departments were not connected to each other and one simple report could take a very long time to produce because relevant information resides in different isolated software and databases. Furthermore, much of the hardware and software used in GPS were aging and in some case deemed obsolete or outdated compared to new

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