

# Home-Grown Technology in University Curriculum

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The average – and not so average – institute around the globe would have the likes of SAP, Oracle and Microsoft applications, besides others, as part of the curriculum for Human Resource, Enterprise Resource Planning and Supply Chain disciplines to help students better understand the business processes in light of the software applications that are helping millions of organizations across the globe manage and monitor their processes.

This is an excellent step – equipping the students with the practical tools while exposing them to the theories and principals that have been kept in mind while developing these very applications. The flexibility these solutions offer the organizations is tremendous and are so generic in nature that an organization of virtually any size, maturity and industry can – almost always – customize them to their specific needs.



While the utility of inclusion of off-the-shelf software as part of curriculum has been in practice for decades and as such cannot be questioned for it truly has delivered a platform for fresh graduates to be recognized by their prospective employers as having a highly useful skill, the question does arrive though; 'Why pay millions for licensing of expensive software, when just as good locally developed software solutions/products are available in the market?'. The question was posed to lecturers and professors at some of the leading universities in Pakistan and the response though skewed in favor of the original premise, was varied and some snippets are reproduced here:

## Advantages of local technology usage

"In an increasingly diversified and challenging business landscape, technology is playing vital role be it research, business positioning and promotion, corporate-academia linkages, distant learning programs etc. IT market and more specifically customized solution providers in Pakistan have established themselves amongst the global giants. It is therefore expensive and unnecessary to buy off-the-shelf, orthodox solution from international sellers rather it is imperative that local solution providers who have grip over the challenges and can meet customization requirements of the institutions, with all global standards justified, are far better. Additionally software accommodations are easier and one on one interaction enhances the chance of continuous improvement. Hence it's mutually beneficial to acquire systems and software solutions domestically if available."

In the same vein, emphasis was laid on utilization of home grown products for catering to prevailing conditions.

"Any automation/system implementation process needs to match the organisation culture, the indigenous business practices of the industry and process maturity of the implementing organisation. In the end system implementation should prove its worth in terms of the benefits it provides to catapult the organisation/workflow to the next level. The advantage of using localized/customized software over imported systems is that it is easier to customize to local demands and culture and so from a change management perspective- easier to gain acceptability. When one implements imported software, the software is built on assumptions of foreign regulations and culture. International software implementations fail in local environment because their systems pre-assumptions do not match local expectations and hence implementing the system workflow becomes difficult and often is shelved."

## Disadvantages of local technology usage

"The role of universities has changed in today's age of information revolution. It is no longer transfer of knowledge from old professors to the young generation. Universities today must produce entrepreneurs and nurture creativity. Training them to use software that someone else has produced limits their potential. The students must be taught to create new software and find new software enterprises that can compete with the best in the world and consequently add to the national growth."

## Way Forward

While conflicting views would exist to any issue, it would be important to register the idea behind introduction either of the two solution sets into the curriculum and the underlying objective:

As part of the MIS curriculum to help students build an understanding of Information Systems. As part of the HR curriculum to give students exposure of an HRIS/HCMS application for performing operations, defining workflows and effects of various available policy options in their industry. As part of the Supply Chain curriculum to give students hands-on exposure of how demand planning translates into the production plan through BOM explosion and also how secondary sales visibility assists with procurement planning, and so on.

