

Information Technology Governance for Tunisian Universities (ITG4TU)

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Report on Best Practices – Almeria

University of Manouba

ITG4TU CONSORTIUM



AMENDMENT HISTORY

Version	Revision	Date	Author	Modification
1	0	06/11/2016	Youssef BEN HALIMA	Initial Version
1	1	09/11/2016	Youssef BEN HALIMA	Improvements
2	0	16/11/2016	Youssef BEN HALIMA	Conclusions and improvements



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1. General Explanation about the visit to UAL

The training of Almeria was very interesting because it was the first opportunity for the invited team to learn fundamentals of IT Governance (ITG). The aim is to determine the best practices of IT Governance that are currently being applied in our universities according to these six principles: Responsibility, Strategy, Acquisition, Performance, Conformance and Human Behavior.

The matching degree between these best practices and the needs of our university determines the maturity level of corporate governance of IT.

In this training, the team received specialized modules which detailing how it could be possible to build ITG models in the Tunisian university. This training also gives them new skills to ensure further professional and academic integration.

The training was followed by a visit to the campus of university of Almeria. The central library and the IT service building was particularly interesting to visit because in Tunisia, such shared infrastructures are unavailable at the university level.

The team was composed of three managers and a coordinator:



Youssef BEN HALIMA: Ph.D. in Computer Science and Coordinator of the University of Manouba for the ITG4TU Project.



Yemna SAYEB: Ph.D. in Computer Science and IT Governance responsible in the University of Manouba.



Cherif GHAZEL: Ph.D. in Computer Networks and IT Governance responsible at the level of CRISTAL RESEARCH LABORATORY.



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1.1. Visit to the library in the UAL

The visit to the library was very interesting and the RFID management system was one of the successful experiences in the governance level. The project achieves all objectives defined by the top management level such as security, improved visibility, less manual work...

1.2. Visit to the IT service building in the UAL

The visit of the Datacenter was also very interesting in the sense that it is showing how it is possible to achieve projects when the team follows the IT Governance principles.

The main objectives of the implementation of such a project are fixed by the strategy community and achieved all along the project implementation.

What we can learn from this visit to the university is the important role of the vice rector in charge of IT. It is the person that guarantees the concordance with the main strategic objectives of the university.

2. Lessons Learnt during the visit and after your arrival

The lessons learnt during the training visit were interesting and exhaustive in the domain. They gave us knowledge and method that may be important and applicable in our institutions. The training purpose could be resumed as following:

- Knowing the importance of the IT Governance and assuming the responsibilities regarding it.
- Presenting how should distributing IT responsibilities throughout the organization.
- Defining IT responsibilities with centralized and which distributed separations.
- Creating, designing and monitoring an IT Governance framework.
- Defining a Strategy Committee to design IT strategies and creating a Steering Committee to monitor the execution of IT projects.
- Implementing some functionalities in the IT Governance framework solution.

Let's focus on some detailed points.



2.1. Centralization

We need more centralized structures for Tunisian universities. Because of universities which were created after faculties and schools, they are a group of institutions based on geographic locations. A few services were centralized when creating them, mainly human resource management services. Consequently, the sense of belonging is weak for the staff and completely missing for students. Having a unique centralized IT service for each university can contribute to fill this gap.

Centralizing the IT services will also allow the schools belonging to the university to share the different projects; we can remember the datacenter shared between all different institutions in the same university.

2.2. Autonomy

We need more autonomy for our universities and institutions: Governance in general and particularly governance of IT projects is not really possible when others decide for you: ministry of higher education, controller of public expense... There is a beginning consciousness about this in Tunisia and some initiatives are taken especially with the growing competition with private universities.

In the case of Almeria, the decision about IT projects is taken according the budget and the priority of projects. The portfolio of projects guarantees the transparency between all departments of the university.

The autonomy is also interesting in the sense that each university has its own budget for the IT projects and decides what has to be done first and what will be done next. The budget is divided between projects depending on the priorities and objectives fulfilled by the projects.

2.3. The rector's role

We learned that the rector is directly involved in the governance of IT projects. He has the highest level of responsibility even if he is not expert in IT because governance is not management. I think that in our case, the first important step is to make our rector (current and future) aware of this role. Then, we can request the creation of the Government Team with a CIO, Strategy Committee, Steering Committee, etc.

The ministry also must be aware of the importance of the vice rector in charge of IT and should create this function in the university and allocate resources to achieve the objectives of his role.



3. Conclusion

Pro:

A method has been learnt to determine best practices and to evaluate the maturity level of corporate governance of IT. Some issues should be resolved to increase the feasibility of this method in our university mainly the lack of: autonomy, centralization and decision-makers' involvement.

In practice, the strategic plans for the IT should satisfy the current and ongoing needs for the organization and their different components. For this training, it is in line with subjects and students needs and attendees. For the general organization, it was suitable. However, and in order to ensure the high-quality deliverables for the coming training session, it is important to improve the number and the quality of the practical cases and more imply students for applying exercises and practical projects.

Cons:

It is very important to see how the ITG framework developed in the university works and how it is aligned with the ITG objectives.

We need to see other examples and best practices in the Spanish universities and other cases in Norway and Germany and we need to see also when the ITG failed in two Spanish universities to avoid problems that can lead to failure.