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AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SRI LANKA THROUGH THE USE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

There is a worldwide demand for the use of information and communication technology regarding the quality of teaching at higher education. The purpose of this paper is to analysis the integration of information communication technology on higher education in Sri Lanka, based on teaching and student learning. It highlights the impacts of ICTs in the higher education in developing countries and explores inherent future developments.

Over the previous quarter century, utilization of ICT has in a general sense changed the practices and methodology of almost all types of attempt inside education and administration. Inside training, ICT has started to have a nearness, yet the effect has not been as broad as in different fields. Instruction is a socially arranged movement and quality training has generally been connected with solid instructors having high degrees of individual contact with learners. The utilization of ICT in higher education pedagogy improves the changes dramatically in developing countries. In any case, with the world moving quickly into computerized media and data, the part of ICT in instruction is turning out to be increasingly critical and this significance will proceed to develop and create in the 21st century. This paper highlights the different effects of ICT on contemporary advanced education and investigates potential future improvements. The paper grapples the part of ICT in changing educating and learning and tries to investigate how this will affect blended delivered method in the universities and colleges.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Higher Education, Information and Communication Technology.

1. Introduction

Information and communication technology play a vital role in various parts in education. The pedagogical developers consider global changes and the demand of stakeholders in education in Sri Lanka. Nowadays, people in the economical world change their jobs and way of life customarily. There is a need to include the ICTs in everywhere, specifically in their teaching and learning in higher education. Information and communication technology has become a necessary form of technology to the contemporary world. It has been a core driver of the globalization world, especially in the field of education as it is the born of changing the style of teaching and learning pedagogy in all over the world.

The regimen of higher education have grown become more and more rapid in the last five decades to reach the demands of quality education for all. To evolve this aspect, Information and communication technology (ICT) needs to develop in the education synchronously. Demand of implementation of ICT, skilled and knowledge labor and competent educators

are major challenges faced under this benchmark. To overcome this backdrop, Government of Sri Lanka makes many steps to improve its readiness for improving the enhancement of ICT in higher education.

1.1 The Enhancement of Technology in Education

For many years, courses have been written around text books. Lectures always use face to face lecture programs with power point presentations. The contemporary ICTs are able to provide strong support for all the following requirements.

- Access to a variety of information sources from different places.
- Student-centered learning based on information access and use of technology.
- Introduce different mode of teaching and learning using technology (e-learning, blended learning)
- Increase of group activities using learning Management System.

Technology-based assessment systems will be significant in improving student learning and generating data that can be used to improve the education system at all levels. The enhancement of Information and Communication Technology helps higher education to collaborate teaching strategies with other professional learnings change the face-to-face teaching styles, introduce blended learning to enrich the pedagogy and expertise over the course of their careers.

The presence of IT has actually transformed the teaching, learning and administrative environment in higher education worldwide to keep the pace with the rapidly changing landscapes and it has become inevitable to implement technology integration (Jazeel&Saravanakumar, 2016). ICT also allows for the creation of digital resources like digital libraries where students, teachers and professionals can access research material and course material from any place at any time (Bhattacharya &Sharma, 2007).

1.2 Implementation of ICT in Higher Education

The use of ICT is encouraged to overcome limitations related to time and distance and to facilitate interactivity in education. (Kumiko, 2010). Nowadays, the rapid development of ICTs is changing all constitution of the higher education. The system has transpired as ICT is a powerful tools for promulgation of knowledge and information. The higher education inaugurated this as a project,changed all the universities infrastructures within two years and metamorphosed all curriculum based on ICT.

Another huge change in the implementation of ICT is renovation of the teaching and learning with e-learning and blended learning. There are many e-learning courses commenced, such as bachelor and master level courses in addition to the current courses. The design of teaching and learning courses modified using blended learning. This style of change supports students those who are studying huge number in a class room. Now, they feel comfortable with their lecture notes, combination of group works, lab sessions and submission of assignments. Lecturers may also be comfortable with teaching without overload of face to face lecturer hours.

Finally, over the past two decades, the introduction of the Internet and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that enhance the knowledge and performances have been integrated into many university courses.

1.3 Implementation of ICT in Teaching and Learning

It is observed that many higher education institutions have moved to e-Learning with the intentions of increasing their teaching and learning effectively and efficiently. The main idea was that academic institutions in Sri Lanka are seeking quality improvements for their activities and ;therefore,are subjected to change their processes with the aid of Information

Technology. Advancement in technology and developments in teaching and learning methodologies have presented new circumstances for more efficient and effective implementation of learning programs, which "make it simple for students and teachers to communicate in non-traditional methods"(Caner, 2009). This has led universities to deploy e-Learning systems. Also students' intake was increased at the university level.

Most of the higher education introduce blended learning model to implement their courses. In Sri Lanka, most of the universities have patterned of teaching styles including a combination of Learning management system and traditional face to face system. Experiences with blended learning models, which blend face-to-face learning and Web-based systems or similar software, are increasingly becoming an attractive option as new innovative technologies (Bonk &Graham, 2006). He also said that as blended learning becomes more and more pervasive in higher education as the most prominent delivery mechanism'. However, adopting BL poses some challenges to faculty (under tertiary education); the most important obstacles are the faculty's lack of knowledge regarding the use of technology in their teaching(Badawood, 2011). Based on the research, the recommendation is that the institution of higher education must offer well-structured faculty training opportunities. (Tanya, 2012). According to Horn and Stacker (2011), Blended Learning is a combination of online and face-to-face instruction; using technology and traditional teaching strategies, blended learning allows for a personalized education conducted by student self-pacing.

Vaughan (2007)cites studies suggesting that students enrolled in blended courses can sometimes have unrealistic expectations. The students in those studies assumed that fewer classes meant less work and had inadequate time management skills and experienced problems with accepting responsibility for personal learning.

Wikramanayake(2003) described the teaching styles in Sri Lanka, "Teaching and learning with the use of technology; E-Learning environment together with tutorial and practical classes facilitates the learning process". The researcher also said that teachers have been able to focus on activity-based learning due to the presence of learning material over the Internet. Hewagamage et al. (2007) mentioned blended learning as "ICT awareness is very important for the success of blended learning and more learning happens when student start engaging in activities which overlap both the classroom as well as virtual learning environment". But, the issues of providing adequate ICT education and the effective use of ICT for education still remain not been properly addressed(Fernando, 2012).

1.4 ICT and its challenges in Higher Education

Nowadays, technology changes education in all levels,especially in higher education, enhancement of ICT enrichment and the quality of learning and teaching. Chew (2009) refers Hinton (2009), Moller (2004), Watson (2001) statements about higher education (HE); says "The value of HE is to hold the promise of opportunity for improvements in the quality of life for people of all cultures. Technology breakthroughs have held the promise to improve life. ICT is often seen as a 'Catalyst for change' that impact on teaching style and learning approaches."

The studies from Chew (2009) acknowledge that educational technologies (specially blended learning) enhanced learning and teaching in the traditional class room. The Sloan Consortium survey by Allen et al. (2007) dispenses extensive quantitative evidence supports growing technologies support education.

The situation in developing countries, using ICT in education developed after 2005. Nowadays, higher education institutions are practicing their course delivering methods using learning management system and traditional face to face methods. So far, only a small portion of evaluation done by the researchers.

The answer of the question “What are the good practices or disruption for blended technology in higher educational experiences?” leads to the development of the idea for blended learning and teaching, which is the subject of this research. The key issues now are around how educators and researchers revealed that blended learning is more favorable than traditional face to face method. The focus is how to combine technology and education

Conclusion

The use of information and communication technologies has been provoked via different stages of innovation in education. It has changed dramatically and shown significant changes in the pedagogy of higher education. Still, we face the problem of achieving the optimum level of performances to meet the target. One of the challenges in teaching is trying to meet the needs of a variety of students. The level of difficulty was high depends on scope and depth of the subject matter compared to the students' background, the number of students in a class room and ICT use of delivering lectures.

The central concern is the process of learning and teaching rather than how the technology is used. The educational technology developed by the technologist, but the results show that less attention has been paid to the pedagogical consideration. Based on the literature and the preliminary test by the researcher, there is a need to develop solutions that would benefit teaching and learning.

Researcher found that the problem of inadequate model practicing in higher education and need for development of models for effective and efficient teaching and learning in Blended model. Graham & Gibbons (2014) said that, “Well-established scholarly domains have common terminology and widely accepted models and theories that guide inquiry and practice, while researchers in less mature domains struggle to define terms and establish relevant models”. Also, he said limited efforts have been made to understand the development related to educational technology.

The researcher established that emphasis on the students' active learning about problems, setting up their own learning goals and actively searching for and analyzing information, a learning design will be developed where technology will strengthen the reflective work of the students.

As such, it is going to highlight effective ways of combining blended teaching and learning with face-to-face instructions, computer assisted instructions and online teaching to maximize students' learning. It will also provide flexibility and efficiency in the both the teaching and learning process.

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