EXPERIMENTING E LEARNING WITH NON-IT DEBUT STUDENTS

P.B. Rathnayake
Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social sciences and Humanities
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihinthale, Sri Lanka
pathumbee@gmail.com

Key words: ICT, E-Learning, Education, Learning Management system

Introduction

Today many educational institutes are applying the advances of Information and communication technology (ICT) to change the way education is delivered. Innovative technologies can play a vital role in enhancing the conventional university education system. E-learning is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance and facilitate teaching and learning. e.g.: computers, Internet, Intranet, learning management systems, CDs and other technologies. E-learning is a unifying term used to describe the fields of online learning, web-based training and technology delivered instructions (Oye , Salleh, & Iahad, 2010). The belief that e-Learning not only covers content and instructional methods delivered via CDs, the Internet or an Intranet (Benson et al., 2002; Clark, 2002) but also includes audio- and videotape, satellite broadcast and interactive TV etc.

e-Learning has become an increasingly important learning approach in higher educational institutions due to enormous growth of internet and related technologies. Nowadays E-learning has a competitive advantage and many universities have implemented it and this has impacts on students' performance. However, still there are other universities and academic institutions that use very low interactive E-learning which is not enough to contribute to the performance of the students. In contrary to that, other higher educational institutions use highly interactive E-learning which directly improves students' performance in general (Rodgers, 2008).

It has been found that students in higher educational institutions that engaged in E-Learning, generally performed better than those in face-to-face courses. (Holley, 2002) found that students who participate in online/ e-Learning achieve better grades than students who studied traditional approach. As result of this finding e-Learning is growing very fast and become popular and that is why many higher educational institutions are adopting to online or e-Learning system.

Objectives of The research

An experimental use of e learning and related material to supplement the teaching of the course FEK2233

Computer literacy, at the Open University of Sri Lanka in Anuradhapura regional centre was carried out between July and December 2013 to a class of over 320 students in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. The course was taught in a one-hour class, with batch wise, two-hour lab sessions every week for each student. The face-to-face sessions were supplemented with course outline, lecture notes, laboratory manuals, quizzes and other interactive materials on the Learning Management Software called Moodle and Google Blogger, while the laboratory sessions were done using individual computers and Moodle. Moodle is an Open Source Course Management System (CMS), also known as a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

The primary objective of the study is to analyze the performances of e Learning with non IT based debut students. For large classes, eLearning seems to be a solution where students can feel closer to the materials and lecture. Furthermore, they have the opportunity to practice outside the laboratory hours.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data was collected in this study. Primary data was collected from interviews, questioners and observations. The total questionnaire returned out of 300 was 215. 23% of the respondents were male students while 77% were female. In addition secondary data was gathered from existing literature such as Internet, papers and books related to the study.

Results and Discussions

This study examined the areas of application of eLearning for large classes and how it was applied at the Open University of Sri Lanka in Anuradhapura regional centre for the FEK2233 course, students and tutors view of the course, as well as experiences from its use. The use of e learning has a significant effect on student's participation, motivation towards the course and has an impact on student's academic performances was revealed, based on data collected from the students. (Rodgers, 2008). The study also finds that greater e-learning engagement leads to better academic performance. More benefits gained; Improved communication between students and demonstrators when compared to the other taught courses, use of eLearning and related methods showed demonstrators, tutors were very enthusiastic since they were able to manage LMS easily rather than handling issues with the limited number of PCs in the laboratory. Course Assessment was also another area that was quite useful. Collection of assignments, quizzers were better and easier through electronic submission. Overall, all staff and students satisfied with the new online course. Students used the materials extensively. They learnt more skills than were required in the syllabus. This is also in line with Berger n.d,(2004) finding when he experimented with web-based material to support a large class. He concluded he had a better rapport with his class; he was able to easily respond to student questions.

Conclusion

The used of eLearning for the course FEK2233 did support the views in

literature about e learning and related technologies. Use of LMS, blogger, wikis and related technologies offered numerous advantages over the conversional face-to-face class. Advantages it provided were based on the fact that activities are independent of time and place. This created greater freedom for students. Apart from during classes, they could log in any other time and examine their course and laboratory session as well as take part in any available online discussion. Moodle learning management system provided the ability to track assignments submitted and assessed. It also provided a way of easy feedback for the students. There was also enough evidence that students felt it added value to the course. There was also a strong correlation between its use and overall course results.

References

Benson, L., Elliot, D., Grant, M., Holschuh, D., Kim, B., Kim, H., et al. (2002). Usability and elearning

Berger, J.D., n.d.(2004), "*Experimenting with Web-based Material to Support Large Lecture Course*", available at: (http://www.tag.ubc.ca/facdev/services/registry/ewwbmtsallc.html)

Holley, D. (2002). "*Which room is the virtual seminar in please?*" Education and Training,, *44*(3)

Instructional design heuristics for e-Learning evaluation. In P., & S. (Eds.), *Proceedings of World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications*.

Oye , N. D., Salleh, M., & Iahad, N. A. (2010). Holistic Elearning in Nigerian Higher Education Institutions. *Journal of Computing, 2*

Rodgers, T. (2008). Student Engagement in the E-learning process and impact on their Grades: *International Journal of Cyber Society and Education.*