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Perception and Attitude of Agricultural Students towards E-learning

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Abstract

E-learning as one of the important tool that has widely been accepted, used and strengthened the teaching, learning curriculum in different sphere of our life in the present world including application in education. Its role in Agriculture is of high importance. Hence an attempt made to conduct a study on e-learning among agriculture students. The papers describe the access, awareness, attitude and perception of Agricultural students towards e-learning. It is revealed from the study that 90.24 per cent of the students were aware and 67.07 per cent of them had favorable attitude towards e-learning .The authors in belief that the findings mentioned in the paper would help in strategic planning, implementation of various ICT projects, determining efficiencies and effectiveness of projects related to educational planning and monitoring.

Key words: Students, Agriculture, Access, Awareness, perception, attitude, E-learning

Introduction:

The roots of E-learning can be traced back to the correspondence course model of learning. One of the first correspondence programs in the U.S. was developed at Pennsylvania State University in 1892, where the main mission was to provide higher education access to remote and rural areas (Banas et al., 1998). The correspondence model was further developed into a distance education program with the integration of technology. During 1920s and 1930s, school such as Penn State experimented with the use of radio to broadcast their correspondence course lessons nationally. To keep pace with the demand generated by the GI Bill in the 1950s, prestigious universities such as Columbia, Chicago, and Penn State launched several distance education programs. Owing to that historical work e-learning concepts, tools, models and methodologies are readily deployed for interactive education, commercial and business purposes. It is said that e-learning is riding on the shoulders of the giant (the Internet) to achieve the objectives and to bring about the all-round development. This is a modernized world where virtual classrooms are the e-lessons. When the control is in hands of a student, he is free to study any time.

Materials and Methods

The present paper is based on a study titled e-learning among agriculture students. The aim was to find out the awareness, access, attitude and perception by agriculture students towards the e-learning. There were total 1088 students was registered for B.Sc., M.Sc. and PhD programme in Institute of Agricultural sciences, Banaras Hindu University, India. Out of which 164 respondents were selected through Proportionate Stratified samplings with equal distribution of 15% allocation. Suitable statistics like mean, SD, and correlation was used to draw inferences.

Variables and their empirical measurement

Thurstone (1946, p. 39) has defined attitude as the degree of positive or negative effect associated with some psychological object. The Scale developed by Cheng, (2006) was used to determine the attitude level of respondents towards e-learning.

These findings indicate that most of the respondents were in favour of applying e-learning for agricultural courses. They believe that applying e-learning for agricultural courses encourage them to continue learning on internet by themselves and they wish the teacher who conduct agricultural courses may apply E-learning in their teaching. For measuring overall attitude toward e-learning the scores of attitude were classified in to three groups such as low, moderate, and high on basis of mean and SD. Table 1, indicates distribution of respondent's attitude towards e-learning.

Table.1.Distribution of respondent's attitudes towards e-learning

Attitude	Frequency	Percentages	Mean	S.D.
Low (15-33)	8	4.88	53.96341	8.789209
Moderate (34-54)	46	28.05		
High (55-75)	110	67.07		
Total	164	100.00		

Overall attitudes of respondents toward e-learning tended to be positive (M=53.96, SD=8.78, range=15-75). Majority of respondents have a high and positive attitude toward e-learning. The distribution pattern was 67.07, 28.05 and 4.88 per cent for high, medium and low attitudes respectively towards e-learning. This is good indicator for the future of e-learning in agriculture education as that most of the respondents accept this learning method. The result is similar to the findings of (Mohammdi and et al. 2010, Paris, 2004; Cheng, 2006; Kellen C. and et al. 2006; Hamdan Mubarak Al:Khasab 2007; Dissanayeke and Wikramasuriya 2009; Dissanayeke and Wickramasuriya, 2010) where maximum respondents have high positive attitude towards e-learning.

Perception towards e-learning

According to Intodia, Somani, Lakhera (1993) perception is the process whereby the individual organizes and make sense of his sensory experience. For analyzing the perception of respondents toward e-learning, statements were written on the basis of reviewing previous research. This statement includes positive and negative statements. Ranking were done by calculating the percentage to each statements by the respondents.

Distribution of respondent's perception towards e-learning

N = 164

Perception	Frequency	Percentages	Mean	S.D.
Low (12-15)	72	43.90	18.76829	4.435769
Moderate (16-20)	14	8.54		
High (21-24)	78	47.56		
Total	164	100.00		

Overall perception of respondents toward e-learning tended to be positive (M=18.76, SD=4.43, range=12-24). Majority of respondents have a high positive perception toward e-learning that accounts 67.07 per cent of the respondents. There after 28.05 and 4.88 respondents have and low perception towards e-learning. This is good indicator for the future of e-learning in agriculture education as that most of the respondents accept. The present finding is similar to the findings of (Kennedy and et al. 2004, Yaghoubi and et al. 2008 and Yaghoubi J. 2009) where maximum respondents have high positive perception.

Conclusion

Higher education in view of globalization cannot afford to remain indifferent and unresponsive to the irresistible aura of e-learning. The spectrum of e-learning has exercised a well discernible shift from formal schooling to de-schooling and to electronic schooling. With collaborative tools the e-learning is moving into virtual classes and virtual communities where the old methods of practice and test have melted into new interactive teaching learning methodologies. A judicious blend of both traditional and virtual learning environment with special attention to students need and satisfaction can create constructive and creative learners, teaching community and learned society. Hence it is important to adopt the alternate option for institutional e-learning is most suitable option to institutional learning if blended with classroom learning and other type of learning to ensure technological, social and interpersonal skills are all learned properly. It is proved that the acceptance level of e-learning by students is high. Hence it has immense practical utility in the field of education. It will be helpful to the various agencies which are working for agricultural development through the use of ICT.

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