

Information and Communication Technology Facilitated Education in National Universities of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The global adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has majorly captured the area of education, as it is the foremost important method to create a technology equipped generation. Uses of ICTs in education are widespread and are continually growing worldwide. However in many cases, the adoption has not kept its promises up to the expected standard. The main purpose of the study is to investigate the related factors that have a significant influence on the use of ICT facilitated education in National Universities of Sri Lanka. These factors contain the Organizational Factors, Individual Factors, Educator Factors, Technological Factors and Social/Cultural Factors. Further the study also aims at assessing whether ICT facilitated education in National Universities would improve the Digital Literacy of the students. The study uses a quantitative method to collect data on the population of graduates of national Universities of Sri Lanka. Questionnaire responses are analyzed for the findings and 176 graduates selected from the three national universities. The results of the study confirms that Organizational, Educator and Technological Factors act as barriers for effective implementation of ICT facilitated education in national universities of Sri Lanka. At the same time the expected outcome of ICT facilitated education which is improving the Digital Literacy has not achieved. Based on the findings, it is recommended that policy-makers should attempt to alleviate the concerns of barriers found and try to take steps to convert the barriers in a favorable manner.

Keywords: information and communication technology, digital literacy, university, education

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, there has been an enormous transformation in the field of technology from Information Technology (IT)¹ to Information and Communication Technology (ICT)² (Jennifer & Yeonjeong, 2008). However, this has made many people to be aware of what information is and how that can be used in the information age for the betterment of their day today activities (Luther, 2004). ICT has enabled the compression of time and space. As a result, time and location are no longer barriers for integration and it has turned the world into a global village. Today in many cases ICT is harnessed with education to improve the efficiency

and effectiveness of delivering knowledge and skills to students. (Luther, 2004).

In a world of economic system, which is fast shifting towards knowledge-intensive economy, the need of integrating ICT in higher education is a vital fact (Wijetunge & Alahakoon, 2005). As immediate members of the labour market, the students of the higher educational sector can be focused and there by necessary steps should be taken to improve their ICT skills.

Even though Sri Lanka is a country with a small geographical span, the power of ICT plays a major role in almost all the markets' affairs (Thyra & De Silva, 2011). Even though many initiatives have been taken to improve ICT in Sri Lankan context, the policies not yet made addressing National issues (Dissanayake, 2011). ICT can be made use to improve the labour market and to bridge the gap between the information poor and rich. With the policies set by ICTA E-Sri Lanka program, modern telecommunication infrastructure will be provided throughout so that all citizens will be benefited irrespective of the location and affordability.

When talking about the overall plans for higher education, On-line access for all the University courses by 2010, On line distance education for all

1 Information Technology was taken to represent the confluence of telecommunication, video, and computing technology³ or rather technologies⁴ which support a diversity of applications (e.g., microcomputer-based specialty software applications, video, multimedia, the Internet, World Wide Web, etc.).

2 Information Communication Technology is enabling technology (both hardware and software) necessary for the delivery of voice/audio, data (high-speed and low-speed), video, fax and Internet services from Point A to Point B (or possibly to multiple points B, C, etc.) Using wired and wireless media and associated equipments that are connected via Internet Protocol (IP) and non-IP networks, where the option exists that any or all of the communicating points may be fixed or mobile during the communication process.