The Staff Perception on the Effect of Virtual Learning Environment in Distance Education.

Gamage, A.W.M

Temporary Lecturer, English Language Teaching Unit, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

Email: wimansika90@gmail.com

Abstract

Technology has removed the distance barriers and has given lot of opportunities for education through human computer interaction. Today, the impact of technology has dramatically changed the distant education system and many educational institutions are looking for different methods to expand their existing practices in regard to technology in order to bring student centered environment (Florida Virtual School, 2006). In order to respond to learner's requirements and overcome the geographical challenges of students who have spread over Sri Lanka, most of the Sri Lankan universities have introduced the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) systems for distance learners. The aim of this research paper is to investigate how the usage of VLE contributes the attainment of the academic improvement of distance learners. Thus, this research paper explores how the ways VLEs are developed and how the ways the teachers make use of it affect the learners' performance and whether teachers are satisfied with the performances of distance learners. For this qualitative study, two Sri Lankan government universities from western province are selected. The sample of study consists of 10 staff members from both universities where VLE is used for teaching distance learners. The research has used both semi-structured and structured interviews in order to collect data. The data is collected both via primary and secondary sources. The interviews were used as the primary source while websites and records of relevant institutions were used for secondary sources. The collected data is analyzed by considering the staffs' perspective on the contribution of VLE in distance education. The results of the research brings out various aspects regarding staffs' perceptions on contribution; effectiveness, usefulness and convenience of Virtual Learning Environment especially it shows that VLE has a significant effect on pass rate of all subjects when it comes to the distance education.

Keywords: Virtual Learning Environment, Human Computer Interaction, Distant Education, Effect, Staff Perspective.