

Chapter 12

Postgraduate Students' Perceived E-Learning Acceptance Model Validation Using SEM Method

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ABSTRACT

E-Learning is a method of delivering knowledge using information technology and electronic media for the remote users. The advantages of E-Learning method can be fully achieved with the postgraduate students. Because, majority of the postgraduate students are engaged in learning while they are working and also geographically dispersed due to the family and work life thus physically appearing for the lecture sessions are rather difficult to them. The Technology Acceptance Model identifies how user accept a new technology. Therefore, this chapter attempts to develop a framework to measure the postgraduate students' perceived technology acceptance by developing an extended version of the Technology Acceptance Model. Hence, the original Technology Acceptance Model is modified and 200 postgraduate students were selected from Sri Lanka to validate the model. The structural regression was accepted based on the model fitting criteria. Thus, this model can be used by the future researchers and can be tested in other contexts. Also this model can be further modified by adding more variables.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8462-1.ch012

INTRODUCTION

ICT has been used by many organizations as a tool of acquiring new knowledge and skills to compete and survive in the changing environment. With the inception of the 'information society' or 'knowledge based economy' no country would survive without absorbing the latest technological developments. As per the International Telecommunication Union statistics (ITU) (2013), by the end of 2013, there were 6.8 billion cellular users worldwide and 2 billion internet users.

A country could gain many advantages by diffusing ICT across the nation. According to the World Economic Forum Report (2009) "leading academics, global organizations and industry analysts agree that there is a direct correlation between the use of ICT and positive macroeconomic growth". When the economy is growing, ICT contributes a lot to the growth. The OECD countries' diffusion of ICT technology and the economic impact is closely assessed and it was revealed that the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Nordic countries and Netherlands have the highest amount of investment in ICT and a higher contribution to GDP growth (OECD, 2003.)

Education is one of the major factors that contribute to the development and the social wellbeing of a nation. It also acts as a resource which can gain competitive advantage (Cairncross, 2003). Education has been recognized as a right that every people in the world should get. According to the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, "everyone has the right to education". To facilitate knowledge based economy it is fundamental to have a healthy human capital enriched with quality education.

Since it has been proved that as ICT diffusion has a great impact on social and economic wellbeing of the society, it undoubtedly can be used to deliver a quality education to the people. To reach people with limited access to resources, technology is an outstanding tool in communication and learning (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009). ICT enables people of all ages, ethnic groups, socio-economic levels, on campus or off, vocational institutions, fully or partly employed, geographically dispersed, and living in urban or rural areas to access education equally (William, 2004). Also using ICT for education, can make a choice of how, when, where and at what rate of study to persons of all levels and provide access to more remote parts of the world and encourage non-traditional learners to acquire the new knowledge (Jesus, 2003a). Using ICT to deliver instructions helps students to get a deeper understanding of the content, build their own knowledge and to widen the complex analytical abilities (Daniel, 2009; Mary & Margaret, 2004). Further ICT can surpass the time and space where learner can access materials 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Also it helps access materials from distant locations. Moreover ICT can increase the quality of education by increasing the motivation to learn with rich media contents (Victoria, 2003).

It is more commonly seen that many tertiary level educational institutes utilize ICT tools to deliver knowledge. It encourages open communication between and among learners; teachers for active learning; makes available information and resources that are not accessible otherwise and encourages the staff to develop educational materials in a more interactive manner (Asian Development Bank, 2009).

As a consequence of ICT in education, the term E-Learning was coined in. As per Naidu (2006) intentional use of information and communication technology for education also known as online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, network learning, web based learning E-Learning is considered as a cost effective method of transferring knowledge, as it can be used to deliver knowledge to a larger number of people.

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