

An Exploratory Study on Learner's Perception Towards E-Learning Courses

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Abstract

Online courses continue to nurture in higher education environment. Students are increasingly demanding online access, and universities and colleges are working on it since, students are increasingly demanding online access to meet the demands. E-Learning is an emerging methodology of modern education. It is growing very fast for last two decades in the education sector. All the university's, schools and companies started offering online courses to satisfy the student needs, and to improve employee effectiveness. E-Learning can deliver more value at very less cost than any other traditional mode of education. This advantage is attached with high-operating leverage for e-Learning companies, should translate them into elevated margins and returns on capital in the industry. E-Learning provides more advantage and user friendly even though it has disadvantages. There are many issues that remain still to be resolved including challenges in assessment, plagiarism and high drop-out rates at E-Learning. It provided classes likes recorded lectures, E-Books, Blogs, Wikis etc. But it's not focused on the learner's perception. On considering these issues it is forward for research which is discussed as further. By the way the course will be getting more effective in psychological perceive of learner and it will create an effective learning process. Research findings suggest that the learner perception could be both positive and negative, and it's varying based on the learners Age, and Gender.

Keywords: E Learning, Educational Technology, Educational Psychology, Information Communication Technology, Learner Perception.

1. Introduction

The Modern education trend perceive education as tool to enhance intellectual ability and knowledge and also gives him a real-time experience through- out his life time. Hence education is primary source and distributor of knowledge. The introduction of technology in the education system is a great boon to it and known as E-Learning. The E-Learning can be defined as the active, lively and instant learning with help of internet to enhance the quality of learning by providing access to various services with time and place convenience. It helps and acts as tool for transmission, propagation and assessment of information and the level of integrity. E-learning enhances the bond and integrity between the teachers and students through positive impact on them. It also provides base for strong research, path for communication, mobility, personalized learning etc. E-learning acts as catalyst for the education industry to fulfil their educational needs of the users and providers. The perception of the user is based on the various icons like system quality, quality of the education system, content of the course, quality of information and technology, user satisfaction, etc. The reason behind users uses E-learning are it is easy to access and communicate at any point of time and place. This paper deals with the user perception and the reason behind using e-learning instead of traditional learning and its success factors.

2. Literature Review

E-learning is the evidence of growth and success of information system. Information system is of multi-facet in nature and complicated too. The information system (IS) success model was created to overcome the early drawbacks and pitfalls. The success of information System (IS) was determined by six components like Information Quality, Service Quality, System Quality, Net Benefits, User Satisfaction and intension of the user to use it.(De lone & Mc lean,2003). The success of e-learning depends on the design of the course, improvement and compatibility of the technology and the efficient management of time. The major challenges that lies in the e-learning are its very hard to understand the goals of the course and the technology problem.

From the research conducted among the learners who undergo traditional learning and e-learning simultaneously,

we come to know than learners can think deeply and respond well in the discussion that takes place in the web in e-learning rather than the oral discussion in the traditional learning. The strength of the e-learning are the flexibility in time, convenience and the option to choose the diversity of learning experience by the user (Pooles 2000). The success of the online learning is significantly influenced by the course design, interaction with the instructor of the course, etc. (swan, Shea, Frederiksen, Pickett, Pelz, 2000).

Higher the user satisfaction and positive experience, higher the intension to use the system.(Peter, De lone & Mc lean,2008). The relationship between the belief, attitude, intension and behaviour in the sequential order helps to predict and use the new technology by the user (Davis & Venkatesh). Apart from the above six components, the instructor quality also act as the base and also plays a major role that drives the employee's perception towards the acceptance of the E-learning (Cheng 2012). The user intension to use the IS directly or indirectly related to system interactivity and Service quality and to Course Quality, instructional quality respectively (Li ET Al 2012). The system components of the e-learning are platform resource and approach which should be assessed and designed with the involvement of student teachers and e-learning management (Manca & Pozzi 2014).

Another factor which influences the student's perceptions of the learning is the interaction on learning (Jiang and Ting 1998). The flexibility of the online learning and the opportunity to communicate with the instructor and among themselves i.e, peers was highly appreciated and valued by the learners and the users (Klingner 2003, Mccall 2002 National centre for vocational education research 2002). The weakness of the e-learning is the delay in the response, lack of response from the instructor (Hara & Kling 1999). Another weakness is the lack of communication and the feedback from the instructor (vendorwell 2003).

The important element of the quality of the online education is satisfaction of the students and as well as users. (Bourne & Moore, 2003). The satisfaction of students and their perceptions comes from the technology that they use for the online learning. The technical difficulties cause distress in their online learning process. (Essex & Cagiltay, 2001; Hara &Kling, 2000). The technical problem and the frequent breakdown in the communication are the barriers of the online learning (Song, Singleton, Hill, & Koh, 2004). When the users of online learning are given adequate training and knowledge about the technology used for the online learning (Schramm, Wagner, & Werner, 2000). The online learning allows more interaction than the traditional lecture classes in case of business school. (Hay, Hodgkinson, Peltier, & Drago, 2004). Online learning not only helps in interaction and also it helps in integrating those who are inactive participators of the traditional class (Mills & Salloway, 2001). The key component of the online interaction is the specific interaction with the instructors. The interaction between the student and the instructor is highly considered by both the students and teachers. (Soo & Bonk, 1998). The instructor is responsible for and plays a vital role in setting tone for the interaction with the students in the online learning environment. (Wise, Chang, Duffy, &Del Valle, 2004). The online learning environment provides and establishes a healthy tone and thereby it creates the chances for increasing the importance of social nature of the learning process. (Barab & Duffy, 2000; Jonassen, 2002). The asynchronous environment in the online learning encourages students in many ways like critical thinking and information processing by providing time to process their discussion suggestion and quires in the online conferences ((Duffy, Dueber, & Hawley, 1998). Asynchronous learning is the methods that induce and encourage in-depth discussion and rich interact in online environment.(Bonk, Hansen, Grabner- Hagen, Lazar, and Mirabelli 1998). The online learning is more effective on case studies in MBA classes conducted through online.(Henson, Kennett, and Kennedy (2003). Online learning helps in better and long term solution for case studies rather than traditional learning. (Benbunan-Fich and Hiltz (1999). A synchronous and asynchronous method helps in the effectiveness of the online learning (Clouse &Evan, 2003). Online learning is suitable for self-motivated learners (McCall, 2002). More experience gives more satisfaction with the online learning. (Arbaugh and Duray, 2002).

3. Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the students perception towards E-Learning process.
- To examine is there any significant change in student perception based on their Age, Gender, and Type of course they opted.

4. Research Design

The research aims to identify the perceptions of students on the use of e-learning platforms in the education system. In order to answer the above stated questions, a questionnaire was designed to survey students' perceptions and priorities with regard to E-learning.

4.1 Participants

The participants of the study were students who pursue their graduate degree at esteem private university in Vellore. They all had undergone the online learning at least once in their course time. The method of sampling that was chosen for the study is convenience sampling method. The Questionnaire was circulated to the students and 120 among them responded to it. The filled questionnaires were selected for analysis after rejecting and filtering the incomplete questionnaire.

Table 1: (Demographic Data)

| Gender | | | | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | MALE | 60 | 61.9 | 61.9 | 61.9 |
| | FEMALE | 37 | 38.1 | 38.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 97 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| Age | | | | | |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | 18 to 20 | 55 | 56.7 | 56.7 | 56.7 |
| | 21 to 23 | 18 | 18.6 | 18.6 | 75.3 |
| | 24 to 26 | 21 | 21.6 | 21.6 | 96.9 |
| | above 27 | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 97 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

4.2 Assumptions and Limitations

The assumption and limitations associated with the research is given below. The participants involved in the research have undergone and completed at-least one course through online. The participants would be very genuine and sincere in filling the given questionnaire. The participants belong to the institution and they were the representative of the institution where the research was conducted. The limitation related to the research was validity and reliability of the survey.

4.3 Data Collection

The Primary data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire which is adapted from previous research. Questionnaires were sent electronically using the Google Form application. They were distributed among students. All constructs were measured from the respondents' perspective using tools like self-report, online survey, 5-point Likert type scale, questionnaire, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."The proposed questionnaire consisted of 4 constructs: (i) Distribution of Content, (ii) partnership and group work, (iii) Communication, (iv) Assessment and feedback. Questions included in the questionnaire were adapted from prior research studies. A proper care was taken to avoid the response error, while and after the data collection from each respondents.

4.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of the data focused on following the areas addressed in the research questions are learners' perception in E-learning and significant change in student perception based on their Age, Gender, and Type of course they opted in E-learning. Analysis of the questionnaire data were accomplished by using SPSS. The entire data set was entered into the software. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's values for each variable. Cross tabulation, Chi-squares tests were applied to the questions, as they tabulate the variable into categories and compute a chi-square statistic.

5. Result

This survey has provided a valuable insight into the views of learner perception on e-learning in terms of.

- Distribution of content
- Collaboration/Group work
- Communication

➤ Assessment/Feedback

5.1 What is learner perception in an e-learning course?

Result of the study indicate that the majority of the participant comfortable with e-learning environment, participant who were equally look for both the professional course and certification courses through e-learning. And 83% of learners like to spend maximum 6month on doing e-learning. More number of participants taking e-learning due to flexibility in timing (58.8%), and (32%) for avoid attendance and direct class rooms. 58.8% of participant undergoing e-learning only to gain knowledge and 25% for getting certified.

Table 2

If you are interested what kind of courses you are looking for

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Professional courses | 51 | 52.6 | 52.6 | 52.6 |
| | Certification courses | 46 | 47.4 | 47.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 97 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 1

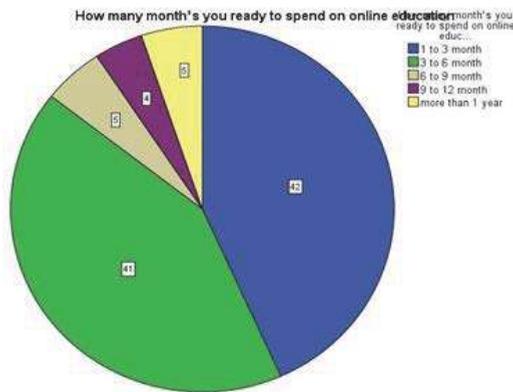


Figure 2

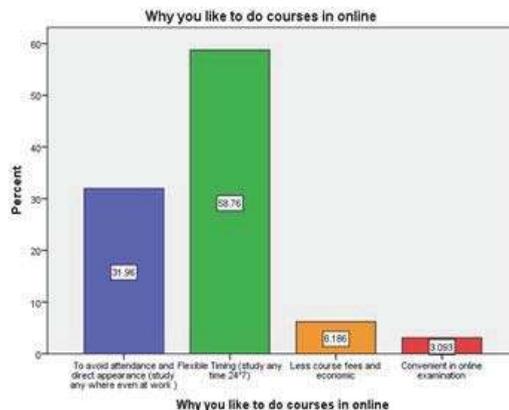


Table 3

What you expect from online course

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Knowledge | 57 | 58.8 | 58.8 | 58.8 |
| | Certificate | 25 | 25.8 | 25.8 | 84.6 |
| | Credit | 5 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 89.7 |
| | Current updated | 10 | 10.3 | 10.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 97 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

In this research many participants reported that, they perceive more on real time interaction on e-learning (39.2%), online recorded lecturer (28.9%), E-content (13.4%), Learning community (12.4%), and (6.2%) in online assessment. This analysis is done based on rank ordered and weighted average.

Table 4

| | R1 | R2 | R3 | R4 | R5 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Online record lecture | 28.9 | 18.6 | 20.6 | 20.6 | 11.6 |
| E-content | 13.4 | 32 | 19.6 | 20.6 | 14.4 |
| Real time interaction | 39.2 | 17.5 | 21.6 | 15.5 | 6.2 |
| Learning community | 12.4 | 22.7 | 13.4 | 23.7 | 27.8 |
| Online assessment | 6.2 | 7.2 | 25.8 | 21.6 | 39.2 |

5.2 What are the changes in student perception based on their Age, Gender, and Type of course they opted?

Based on gender a previous study show that female use, interest and confidence in using the Internet is high but, in comparison with male respondents the females had not co-up Internet as rapidly (Rosie heimrath,2001). In this research it shows that in overall gender group 57% of learner prefer e-learning course for flexible timing. And 31% prefer e-learning to avoid direct class, whereas particularly 75% of female respondents prefer e-learning for flexible timing.

Table 5

Gender * Why you like to do courses in online Crosstabulation

| | | Why you like to do courses in online | | | | Total | |
|--------|--------|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|------|
| | | To avoid attendance and direct appearance (study any where even at work) | Flexible Timing (study any time 24*7) | Less course fees and economic | Convenient in online examination | | |
| Gender | MALE | Count | 24 | 29 | 5 | 2 | 60 |
| | | Expected Count | 19.2 | 35.3 | 3.7 | 1.9 | 60.0 |
| | FEMALE | Count | 7 | 28 | 1 | 1 | 37 |
| | | Expected Count | 11.8 | 21.7 | 2.3 | 1.1 | 37.0 |
| Total | | Count | 31 | 57 | 6 | 3 | 97 |
| | | Expected Count | 31.0 | 57.0 | 6.0 | 3.0 | 97.0 |

The study shows that in overall age group 57% of learner prefer e-learning course for gaining knowledge. And 25% of learner prefer e-learning course to get certified. Whereas the result indicate that when the age of learner increases they concentrate more on knowledge than get certified form the course.

Table 6

Age * what you expect from online course Cross tabulation

| | | What you expect from online course | | | | Total | |
|-------|----------|------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|-------|------|
| | | Knowledge | Certificate | Credit | Current updated | | |
| Age | 18 to 20 | Count | 30 | 21 | 2 | 2 | 55 |
| | | Expected Count | 32.3 | 14.2 | 2.8 | 5.7 | 55.0 |
| | 21 to 23 | Count | 10 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 18 |
| | | Expected Count | 10.6 | 4.6 | .9 | 1.9 | 18.0 |
| | 24 to 26 | Count | 15 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 21 |
| | | Expected Count | 12.3 | 5.4 | 1.1 | 2.2 | 21.0 |
| | above 27 | Count | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | | Expected Count | 1.8 | .8 | .2 | .3 | 3.0 |
| Total | | Count | 57 | 25 | 5 | 10 | 97 |
| | | Expected Count | 57.0 | 25.0 | 5.0 | 10.0 | 97.0 |

Age of learners and their perception towards Distribution of content and communication will positively influencing e-learning course. And their perception towards collaboration and assessment will not positively influencing e-learning course. Gender of learners and their perception towards communication and collaboration will positively influencing e-learning course. And their perception towards distribution of content and assessment will not positively influencing e-learning course. Type of course they opted and their perception towards distribution of content will positively influencing e-learning. And their perception towards communication, collaboration, and assessment will not positively influencing e-learning course.

Table 7

| FACTOR | PEARSON CHI-SQUARE (ASSUMP. SIG.) | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| DISTRIBUTION OF CONTENT | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| AGE | 0.022 | 0.000 | 0.015 | 0.157 |
| GENDER | 0.830 | 0.949 | 0.834 | 0.028 |
| TYPE OF COURSE OPTED | 0.019 | 0.033 | 0.026 | 0.051 |
| COMMUNICATION | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| AGE | 0.015 | 0.037 | 0.124 | 0.037 |
| GENDER | 0.018 | 0.040 | 0.220 | 0.049 |
| TYPE OF COURSE OPTED | 0.163 | 0.029 | 0.322 | 0.018 |
| COLLABORATION | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| AGE | 0.003 | 0.176 | 0.287 | 0.171 |
| GENDER | 0.010 | 0.037 | 0.040 | 0.130 |
| TYPE OF COURSE OPTED | 0.046 | 0.163 | 0.290 | 0.018 |
| ASSESSMENT | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| AGE | 0.186 | 0.210 | 0.265 | 0.105 |
| GENDER | 0.016 | 0.078 | 0.076 | 0.059 |
| TYPE OF COURSE OPTED | 0.026 | 0.163 | 0.116 | 0.012 |

From this analysis we conclude that there is a common ground among 4 factors (i) Distribution of Content, (ii) partnership and group work, (iii) Communication, (iv) Assessment and feedback when it comes to age, gender, and course opted. But still there is one negative significant relationship has been found, that is between assessments& feedback based on the respondents age, gender, and course that they opted.

6. Conclusion

Learning empowered with the technology is online learning. E-learning is used as the tool for training and development in many institutions and organization for their full time employers which in-turn enhance their skills and productivity. There was huge acceptance among the users for e-learning until it has been made as practical session. The dropout ratio has increased among the learners when it was implemented as mandate practical session. The hurdle of e-learning is the lack of importance given to psychological factors like behaviour, cognitive, social, constructive, etc. It is similar to all age group and different culture, but their expectations vary from individual to individual. Hence it is very crucial to analyze the perception of user before creating the e-learning. The perception of the user helps to make the course more effective in both teaching and learning process.

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