Use Of Internet Tools by B.Ed. Students

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Abstract

The investigation of pattern of Internet use by faculty and students is an important source of information to an institution's management regarding the development, management and evaluation of their information technology projects. This research assesses the use of Internet by student teachers and the constraints faced by the student teachers in using the Internet makes suggestions for its improvement. This study has shown that although, the use of Internet is widespread among students it has become imperative for the colleges to address a number of issues for the students to optimally reap the benefits derivable from Internet use.

"Like the PC, the Internet is a tidal wave. It will wash over the computer industry
and many others, drowning those who don't learn to swim in its waves."
Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft Corporation

INTRODUCTION

The convergence of information and communication technologies as typified by the Internet is increasingly having more influence on all aspects of the society as it has become an integral part of the daily lives of many people. It has had a transformative impact on the mode of information sharing and access globally. Information and knowledge disseminated through the slow process of oral communications or with paper materials can now be transferred rapidly from an individual to an infinite number of users through a number of media and formats. The Internet is the fastest growing communication technology and has emerged as a major source of information that connects people, data and other computers, reducing the world to the much talked-about *global village*.

Internet has the potential to positively impact on the social,political, educational, technological and other spheres of lives of its people.The education sector was among those

that first embraced the use of Internet, and it has continued to broaden the breadth and depth of opportunities within institutions of higher learning worldwide. The Internet serves as a useful tool in support of the various educational activities that ranged from research to teaching. Anderson and Reed (1998) noted that the Internet technology and computers has made it possible for students to be active learners and allowed instructors to be facilitators. Jackson, et al. (2011) remarked that the Internet will level the educational playing field due to its availability to everyone, everywhere, and any time, irrespective of gender, income or other socio-demographic characteristics. Thus, the Internet is a vital tool that will propel education to greater heights as the world moves further into the knowledge-based economy.

Today, survival in academics without the Internet is hardly imaginable. The Internet has found useful applications in online data repositories, library catalogues, journals, news services, student and financial administration systems, online supported or solely online conducted teaching, as well as in digital communication with fellow students and lecturers. The investigation of how the Internet fits into the daily life of staff and students at educational institutions is worthwhile when one considers the ubiquitous and all pervasive communications tool features of the Internet. Consequently, studies have been carried out in many places to understand how students use the Internet, the purposes for which the students use the Internet, the search engines used, their Internet skills as well as problems that hinder efficient Internet use.

The investigation of pattern of Internet use by faculty and students could be important sources of information to an institution's management regarding the development, management and evaluation of their information technology projects. This research aims at assessing the use of Internet by student teachers and to discover the constraints faced by the student teachers in using the Internet with a view to making suggestions for its improvement.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To discover the level of access and pattern of use of the Internet by the student teachers

- To determine for which purposes the Internet was being used by the student teachers

- To discover the extent of use of the various Internet based services and resources by the student teachers.

- To identify the problems faced by the student teachers regarding access and use of the Internet.

The findings of this study are significant as it will identify and recommend practical improvement measures for efficient utilisation of Internet facilities by the student teachers.

Literature Review

In the drive of higher educational institutions to promote the use of information and communications technology (ICT), the role of the Internet cannot be over emphasized as it makes it possible for lecturers, researchers and students to have access to non-traditional information sources from any part of the globe. Students browse the Internet to have access to educational materials for research, instruction, and literature searching and to serve as a source of information in meeting other needs. Mahmood (2008).

Mishra (2009) studied the use of Internet at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. The findings showed that Internet was very important for 60.8% of the respondents, with 74.6% using the Internet for research; 71.5% mentioned Google as their preferred search engine and concludes that necessary facilities should be put in place for faculty and students to make optimal use of information resources available on the Internet. Internationally, reports abound in literature on Internet use by University students. Robinson (2005) examined Internet use among African American college students in US historically Black Colleges and Universities. The findings showed that most of the students (76%) had used the Internet for more than three years, access points being at school for 49% or at home for 47%, an average of two hours per day was spent online and the main purpose of Internet use was to learn and find school resources. Kaur and Manhas (2008) conducted a survey on the use of Internet services and resources by students and teachers in the engineering colleges of Punjab and Haryana states of India and found that all the respondents make frequent use of the Internet because they gained access from either college or at home. More than 75% of the respondents' use the Internet services for educational and research purposes. Google and Yahoo search engines were more widely used than other search engines. Malik and Mahmood (2009) conducted a study on web search behaviour of students of University of the Punjab. The study found that 59.5% of the students used the Internet to search the materials for their information needs at home, 25% at university, 15% at both home and University and 0.5 % at some other places. The majority of the students (67.5%) used the Internet daily; 72.5% of the population used the Internet for research, 76.5% for education, 68% for entertainment, 18.5% for sports and 6% for shopping purposes. Google was the most frequently used search engine by 97%,

followed by Yahoo's (72%). The constraints faced by the students included slow speed, overload of information, irrelevant information, and poor quality.

Population- The target population of this study were student teachers of Pune University

Sample - A sample of 91 student teachers were chosen using incidental sampling technique

Methodology- The study employed a descriptive survey method that utilized a questionnaire as the major data collection tool. The questionnaire was self administered to students. The students were informed before completing the questionnaire that the forms were anonymous and that there is no information in the questionnaire that could identify any individual student. Selected students were interviewed to obtain further clarification on the grey areas.

Pilot Survey - The pilot survey was conducted by administering the draft questionnaire to 5 students that did not form part of the final study to gauge the effectiveness of the questionnaire. The results from this study resulted in the revision of the questionnaire to enhance its clarity and comprehensiveness.

Data Analysis - The data collected was analyzed using percentage analysis

Major Findings

- The results show that less than half of the respondents (54 %) had undergone one or more form of computer training, while 46 % of the respondents indicated that they did not. The respondents had the training in commercial computer centres.

- Most of the respondents (97 %) had accessed the Internet, while the reasons for non use of Internet by 3 % included lack of training on how to use, the high cost of Internet access, lack of computer literacy and lack of time.

- Slightly over one third of the respondents (24 %) had 5–6 years Internet use experience, followed by those with 3-4 year experience (34 %) while the mean Internet use experience for the respondents was 4.2 years.

- The greatest number of respondents (66 %) accessed the Internet at home followed by college computer lab (30 %), and cybercafes (4%).

- The majority of the respondents (52 %) learnt Internet skills on their own through trial and error, from colleagues and friends (20 %), and the school/college 28%.

- Most respondents accessed the Internet once in a week (42 %), 45 % used it 2-3 times per week and 13 % of respondents accessed the Internet daily.

- The majority of students (60 %) spent 1-5 hours per week on the Internet followed by 30 % that spent 6-10 hours per week, while 10 % spent 11-15 hours weekly on the Internet.

- Students used the Internet for a variety of purposes which include for communication (90.6%), doing class assignments (43.5%), to update knowledge (32.9%) and to supplement lecture notes (27%).

- The most used Internet services was e-mail followed by those that browsed www, chatting and instant messaging.

- The students used the email to communicate mostly with their friends and family members (72.0%), and 40.1% indicated that they used it to communicate with their fellow students and colleagues and only 1%mentioned using Internet to communicate with their lecturers.

- Most respondents (78.9%) used Google as the search engine to locate information; followed by 45.9% that used Yahoo, while 19.8% used Scholar Google.

- The Internet was preferred over the library by 97.1% of respondents, while less than (3 %) indicated preference for library.

- The students encountered many problems in their use of Internet, the major ones being slowness of the server, limited institutional Internet facilities, frequent power outage and high cost of usage.

Recommendations

This study has shown that although, the use of Internet is widespread among students it has become imperative for the colleges to address a number of issues for the students to optimally reap the benefits derivable from Internet use. It is obvious that harnessing the benefits of Internet technology for learning will lead to the college becoming more competitive and attractive to prospective students. Arising from the findings, the following suggestions are being put forward to motivate students' use of Internet.

There is the need for the colleges to develop clear ICT policy framework that will support the development of ICTs at the colleges in general; and ensure that the staff and students are exposed to training on an ongoing basis so that they will know appropriate techniques to use for obtaining information as against the current practise of learning to use it through adhoc approaches or informal sources. The colleges should provide Internet access to students

within the campuses in its computer laboratories as well as make available more computers and improved networks in its library as the study found that the high cost of accessing the Internet through the commercial cyber cafes limits its use. The provision of free access will increase the time spent on Internet by students as studies have shown that students tend to spend more time on Internet when access is free. Though the Internet is relatively new in the educational setting, it will soon be commonplace if current growth continues. The educator can prepare for the future now by learning and experimenting with the Internet. The possibilities for the Internet are endless, and it is truly up to the teacher or student to develop creative ways of using it in the classroom. Though it may have some disadvantages, such as expense or time consumed, the Internet can creatively motivate and inspire our students to learn more about their world. The Internet brings the future closer, and we must begin to use and expand its potential whenever possible.

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