PERCEPTION AND USAGE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING AMONG THE WOMEN ACADEMICIANS: A STUDY

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Abstract *This study is aimed to examine the virtual learning in the perspectives of the women academicians in Chennai. Questionnaire method was adopted to collect the data. Out of 225 Questionnaire 198 were received back. This study examines the characteristics of the respondents, benefits of virtual learning, tools and techniques used for virtual learning, kinds of training required for virtual learning and difficulties in virtual learning. The highest number of respondents 21(8.58%) were for the opportunity of powerful information sharing, 19(9.59%) were for open source version of tools because of the rapid growth of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) open educational sources were available tremendously. 25(12.62%) were for meet their level of knowledge and interest. The highest number of respondents 32(16.16%) were identified in the difficulty of handling new technologies. 23(11.61%) were lack of common goals, 21(10.6%) were identified that the students may feel isolated.*

Keyword: *Virtual Learning, Women Academicians, Information and Communication Technology*

INTRODUCTION

While many forms of technology have become main stream in higher education, not every student is seeking to enroll in distance education courses/degree programs. Many students continue to search for interaction with faculty and other students. How can students that are distracted by other life priorities, disabled students and even traditional students achieve better interaction and reach the heart of their learning experience

Through tools that help them learn more efficiently and effectively such as:

- Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- Webinars
- Blogs
- Assistive technology

These technological pedagogy tools must be user-friendly so that the majority of faculty can use them easily. However, the classroom still needs to be the center of learning interaction and engagement. Growing trend toward "hybrid programs" which combine online and classroom experiences**.**

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A virtual learning environment (VLE) is a software system designed to facilitate teachers in the management of educational courses for their students. VLE'S are most often used to supplement the face-to-face. This computer program facilitates computerized learning or e-learning. Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) are an increasingly important part of academic systems in higher education because they play an important role in the academic enterprise of teaching and learning. VLE's also help manage the administrative aspects of teaching a course

REVIEW LITERATURE

Greenhow C.A. and others (2009) discussed the characteristics of Web 2.0 that differentiate it from the Web of the 1990s, describes the contextual conditions in which students use the Web today, and examines how Web 2.0's unique capabilities and youth's proclivities in using it influence learning and teaching. Two important themes, learner participation and creativity and online identity formation, emerged from this analysis and support a new wave of research questions. A stronger research focus on students' everyday use of Web 2.0 technologies and their learning with Web 2.0 both in and outside of classrooms is needed. Finally, insights on how educational scholarship might be transformed with Web 2.0 in light of these themes are discussed. Barnett, J. and others (2013) tried using connectivism to teach an online graduate Education course called Teaching in a Virtual World. As a way to embody the many connections inherent in the group, all members of the class created and taught modules of their own choosing to each other. The instructor and two former students reflected together online in depth about their experience and coded their joint understandings. Schwab's

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commonplaces of curriculum emerged in the data, demonstrating that it is still current. They found that the course, however, was not completely connectivity due to limitations emanating from its operation within a traditional university setting. Adesina, A., Molloy, D. (2012) analysed the Virtual Learning Process Environment (VLPE) based on Business Process Management (BPM) conceptual framework. Within the VLPE, learning process management and administration can be achieved through the possible orchestration of flexible education pedagogy around a course material in the form of learning process workflows using a Pedagogy-Specific modeling tool. The modeled pedagogy can be deployed by course instructors and can be instantiated by as many as possible students that are enrolled for the module within the VLPE. Consequently, qualitative and quantitative learning process information can be captured. The captured information can be analysed and the effectiveness of any adopted pedagogy can be re-assessed and re-evaluated with the potential to improve course design and positive learning outcomes

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study aims to analysis the virtual learning in the perspectives of the women academicians in Chennai.

OBJECTIVES

- To classify the characteristics of the respondents
- To identify the purpose of virtual learning
- To analyse the benefits of virtual learning
- To study the tools and techniques used for virtual learning
- To know the kinds of training required for virtual learning
- To identify the difficulties in virtual learning

METHDOLOGY

This analysis attempts to study the characteristics and the perspectives of the virtual learning among the women academicians in Chennai. This study carried over among the women academicians and the sufficient time was given to the respondent to furnish the information. 225 Questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, out of this 198 were received back, making the response rate 87.98%. The collected data were classified and tabulated according to the objectives of the study analyzed by using statistical tools, such as percentage analysis.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Category wise Distribution of Questionnaires

S.No	Category	Distributed	Replied
1	U.G	108(48%)	98(43.56%)
2	P.G	76(33.77%)	69(30.66%)
3	Research scholars	28(12.44%)	22(9.78%)
4	Faculties	13(5.77%)	9(4%)
	TOTAL	225(100)	198(88.00)

The respondents were classified under the various category. Among the 225, 108(48%) Questionnaire were distributed to the Undergraduates only 98(43.55%) were returned back and 76(33.77%) questionnaires distributed to P.G students 69(30.66%) were returned back. The 28(12.44%) were distributed to the research scholars, 13(5.77%) were faculties. Out of the 225 only 198(87.98%) were returned back. It is concluded that, the 198(87.98%), 69(30.66%) were post graduates, 9(4%) were faculties and 22(9.77%) were research scholars.

Table 2: Age wise Distribution of the Respondents

S.No	Age Frequency	No. of Respondents	%
1	<20	32	16.16
2	20-30	101	51.01
3	30-40	43	21.71
4	40-50	15	7.57
5	>50	7	3.53
	TOTAL	198	100

From the table 2 represented the respondents were categorized under their age frequency. The highest number of respondents 101 (51.01%) were in the age frequency of 20-30, 43(21.71%) were in the age frequency of 30-40, 32(16.16%) were in below 20, 15(7.57%) were in 40-50 frequency and 7(3.53%) were in the frequency of >50 which is also the least among the overall respondents

Table 3: Purpose of Using Virtual Learning

S. No	Purpose	No. of respondents	%
1	Develop knowledge on internet and computer skills	32	16.16
2	For different styles of learning	27	13.63
3	Meet their level of knowledge and interest	25	12.62
4	For time flexibility	26	13.13

5	The opportunity for powerful information sharing	29	14.64
6	To learn more and gain more knowledge	32	16.16
7	Cost of the education	27	13.63
	TOTAL	198	99.97

The data available in the table 3 indicates the respondents need for the purpose of virtual learning. The highest number of respondents 32(16.16%) were used to develop knowledge on internet and computer skills and also to learn more and gain more knowledge. 29(14.64%) were for the opportunity of powerful information sharing, 27(13.63) were for different styles of learning and for the cost of education, 26(13.13%) were for time flexibility and 25(12.62%) were for meet their level of knowledge and interest.

Table 4: Benefits in Virtual Learning by Respondents

S.No	Benefits	No. of Respondents	%
1	The opportunity for powerful information sharing	21	8.58
2	Ease of collaboration	12	6.06
3	Open Source versions of tools	19	9.59
4	Ability to log or track learning activities	17	8.58
5	Continuous monitoring	13	6.56
6	Easy to use and to disseminate	12	6.06
7	Flexibility of timing	16	8.08
8	Possibility for interaction	13	6.56
9	Improved computer skills	9	4.54
10	Unlimited number of learners simultaneously	19	9.59
11	Easy to update	17	8.58
12	Ability to post the queries to message boards, bulletin boards , discussion sited, seminars etc	18	9.09
13	Teachers conduct live classes in virtual class rooms	12	6.06
	Total	198	99.95

Table 4 shows that the benefits of the virtual learning by the respondents. Out of the 198(99.95%), the highest number of respondents 21(8.58%) were for the opportunity of powerful information sharing, 19(9.59%) were for open source version of tools because of the rapid growth of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) open educational sources were available tremendously. 19(9.59%) were also attracted by the benefit of unlimited number of learners simultaneously 18(9.09%) were for the benefit of the ability to post the queries to message board, bulletin boards, discussions and sited seminars etc., 17(8.58%) were for easy to update and ability to log or track learning activities. 16(8.08%) were for flexibility of timing, 13(6.56%) were for continuous monitoring and also possibility of interaction.12(6.06%) were for ease of collaboration, easy to use and to disseminate and also for the teachers can conduct live classes in virtual class rooms. 9(4.54%) respondents were for the improved computer skills.

For virtual learning the practical knowledge is an important one the below Table. 5 shows that the kinds of training required for virtual learning by the respondents.

Table 5: Kinds of Training Required for Virtual Learning

S. No	Kinds of training	No. of Respondents	%
1	Computer based training,(CBTs) modules on CD-Rom's,	48	24.24
2	Web based training accessed through intranet (WBTs)	76	38.38
3	Traditional e-Learning (\ making audio-visual content, CD's, Presentations)	31	15.65
4	Internet based training (IBT)	43	21.71
	Total	198	99.98

There were different kinds of training like computer based training (CBT), Web based training (WBT), and Internet based training (IBT) and Traditional e-Learning. The highest number of respondents 76(38.38%) were required web based training accessed through intranet, 48(24.24%) were for computer based training modules on CD-ROM's, 43(21.71) were Internet based training and 31(15.65%) were need Traditional e-Learning (making audio-visual content, CD's, Presentations, etc,.

Table 6: Tools and Techniques used for Virtual Learning

S.No	Tools and Techniques	No. of respondents	%
1	Wikis, blogs, RSS, Podcasts, etc,.	43	21.71
2	Copies of lecture in the form of text, audio, or video presentations, and the supporting visual presentations	37	18.68
3	Including e-mail, threaded discussions, chat rooms, Twitter	23	11.61
4	Web 2.0 for two way interaction	27	13.63
5	2D,3D Imaging	29	14.64

6	Animation based motion pictures	22	11.11
7	Graphic pictures	17	8.58
	Total	198	99.96

Table 6 indicates that the tools and techniques used for virtual learning by the respondents. Out of the 198, 43(21.71%) were used the wikis, blogs, RSS, Podcast, etc,. 37(18.68%) were for the copies of lecture in the form of text, audio, or video presentations and the supporting visual presentations. 29(14.64%) were for 2D, 3D imaging, 27(13.63%) were for web 2.0 for two way interaction, 23(11.61%) for including e-mail, threaded discussions, chat rooms, Twitter etc,. 22(11.11%) of the respondents were used the animation based motion pictures and 17(8.58%) were used the graphic pictures only

Table 7: Difficulties in Virtual Learning

S.No	Barriers	No. of respondents	%
1	Lack of training	27	13.63
2	difficulty in handling new technologies	32	16.16
3	Lack of common goals	23	11.61
4	Understanding the language	14	7.07
5	Lack of motivation	19	9.59
6	Students may feel isolated	21	10.6
7	Instructor may not be always available	12	6.06
8	Slow internet connection	26	13.13
9	Lab work is difficult in virtual classes	24	12.12
	Total	198	99.97

Table 7 states the difficulties met by respondents in virtual learning. The highest number of respondents 32(16.16%) were identified in the difficulty of handling new technologies, 27(13.63%) were lack of training, 26(13.13%) were slow internet connection, 24(12.12%) were feel lab work is difficult in virtual classes. 23(11.61%) were lack of common goals, 21(10.6) were identified that the students may feel isolated. 19(9.59%) were lack of motivation, 14(7.07%) were found the difficulty in understanding the language and only 12(6.06%) were the instructor may not be always available.

CONCLUSION

Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) are an increasingly important part of academic systems in higher education because they play an important role in the academic enterprise of teaching and learning. To days all the libraries are providing the all forms of electronic media to the user communities. The academic libraries play a vital role to provide a better learning environment to end users.

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