UTILIZATION OF E-LEARNING PLATFORMS BY THE POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS AND RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF SANT GADGE BABA AMRAVATI UNIVERSITY, MAHARASHTRA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract: - *This paper focuses on the utilization of e-learning platforms by the post graduate students and research scholars. It is an attempt to find out the awareness of e-learning, purpose of e-learning and to measure satisfaction level of students and research scholars in e-learning. E-learning is a large and growing market with great potentials in higher education. There are some challenges which are facing in higher education. Training of e-learning provides many solutions to these problems. It is an attempt to identify problems faced by the students and research scholars. The finding shows that, students and research scholars of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra is aware about e-learning and its usage. The research paper highlights the current status of e-learning and problems faced by students and research scholars of Amravati University, Maharashtra.*

Keywords : E-learning platform, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Digital Information Technology (DIT), Information Technology (IT), Network Technology, Online education.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-learning is part of the new dynamic that characterises educational systems at the start of the 21st century (Georgiven and Tifonova, 2008). The rapid proliferation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Digital Information Technology (DIT) has reshaped the communication, teaching and learning techniques, and the perceptions of learners and instructors towards the access and use of learning objects.

The most of the students from university have updated knowledge of Information Technology (IT) and they use various smart technologies in their learning process.

E-learning is termed as on-line learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, network and web based learning (Satyajaya, 2007). Abbad et al. (2009), defined e-learning to mean any learning that is enabled electronically. They however narrowed this definition down to mean

learning that is empowered by the use of digital technologies. This definition is further narrowed by some researchers as any learning that is internet enabled or web-based (LaRose et al, 1998; Keller and Cernerud, 2002). The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for educational purposes has increased, and the spread of network technologies has caused e-learning practices to evolve significantly (Kahiigi et al., 2008). The Internet has become one of the vital ways to make available resources for research and learning for both teachers and students to share and acquire information (Richard and Haya 2009). The reason behind the selection of topic is that, it is necessary to identify problems in using e-learning platforms and find out the solution for it.

2. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS: REVIEW

There are number of definition of e-learning given by various scientists and educationalist. E-learning is the use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that that range from add on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face to face meetings by online encounters (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). E-learning is to take a course online using a modem, wireless, or cable connection to access academic course material from a computer, phone, or handheld device (Governors State University, 2008). E-learning is distance education through remote resources (Marques, 2006). E-learning is the use of technology to

deliver learning and training programs (E-learning portal, 2009).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1. To examine the attitudes of post-graduate students and research scholars towards various aspects of e-learning.
2. To reveal whether the post-graduate students and research scholars are aware about e-learning.
3. To determine the purpose of e-learning among post-graduate students and research scholars.
4. To measure the satisfaction level of post-graduate students and research scholars in e-learning.
5. To find out the problems faced by the post-graduate students and research scholars in e-learning.

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

4.1 Scope of the research study

The scope of the present research study is limited to the all 28 teaching departments of various disciplines in Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra.

4.2 Limitation of the research study

The study covers the post-graduate students of 28 teaching departments of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra. The study used simple percentage method for data

analysis. The purpose and intent of the research study is purely academic.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

A survey is carried out among post-graduate students and research scholars from all teaching departments of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra. In the university there are 28 teaching departments of four faculties such as Humanities, Science and Technology, Commerce and Management, and Interdisciplinary. The survey data is collected through structured questionnaire. It is designed on the basis of research objectives of the study. The collected data was screened, classified and tabulated in the table and analysed with simple statistical techniques.

5.1 Sampling

The Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University was established in the year 1983. It is the state funded university of Maharashtra State. The university has 23 governments aided and 5 self-financing post-graduate teaching departments. Cluster sampling technique has been used for data collection. The questionnaire was circulated amongst all the teaching departments. Total 350 questionnaires distributed to students and research scholars out of them 270 were received so the response rate is 77.14%. The faculty wise distribution of questionnaire and the response rate of respondents given in the Table-1.

Table-1: Distribution of questionnaire and Response			
Faculty	**Teaching Departments**	**Questionnaire**	
		Distributed	**Received**
Humanities	English, Hindi, Marathi, Economics*, Political Science*, History*	80	66
Science & Technology	Botany, Zoology, Physics, Computer, Biotechnology, Microbiology, Geology, Chemistry, Applied Electronics, Mathematics, Statistics, Chemical Technology	130	102
Commerce & Management	MBA, Commerce*	50	33
Interdisciplinary	Social Science, Library & Information Science, Law, Home Science, Education, Physical Education, Women's Study Centre, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Thoughts*	90	69
Total		**350 (100%)**	**270 (77.14%)**

Note: * Self financing Teaching Departments

6. RESULT:

6.1 Gender wise distribution of Respondents

The Table-2 revels that, out of total 270 respondents 208 were post-graduate students while 62 were research scholars. In overall respondents 154 (57.03%) were girls' students

and 116 (42.97%) were boys. No transgender student and research scholar learn in any teaching departments or admitted to any research programme. It is surprisingly noticed that girls' students were majority in number in both category post-graduate students and in research scholar category.

Table-2: Gender wise distribution of Respondents

Types of Respondents	Gender	Number of Respondents (%)	Aggregate Percentage
PG Students (N=208)	Boys	88	32.59%
	Girls	120	44.44%
	Transgender	0	0
Research Scholars (N=62)	Boys	28	10.37%
	Girls	34	12.60%
	Transgender	0	0
Total Respondents		**270**	**100%**

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

6.2 Attitudes of post-graduate students and research scholars towards various aspects of e-learning

Attitudes of post-graduate students and research scholars' towards various aspects of e-learning are analysed under five sub-heading such as nature and extent of information needed, access to information through e-learning platform, assessment of e-learning information source, actual information use via e-learning and economic, ethical, and social issues in e-learning. Table-3 shows the attitudes of post-graduate students and research scholars towards various aspects of e-learning.

Table-3: Attitudes of post-graduate students and research scholars towards various aspects of e-learning

S. N.	Various Aspects	Opinion of P. G. Students and Research Scholars (N=270)					χ^2 Value
		SA	AG	NT	DA	SD	
1.	Nature and extent of information needed	141	68	16	27	18	1.09
2.	Access to information through e-learning platform	139	61	20	35	15	4.21
3.	Assessment of e-learning information sources	149	52	21	35	15	5.22
4.	Actual information use via e-learning platform	176	41	6	27	20	5.86
5.	Economical, ethical, and social issues in e-learning	130	90	14	18	18	1.96

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

The Table-3 gives the details of attitude of post-graduate students and research scholars towards various aspects of e-learning. It is found that, nature and extent of information needed average χ^2 value is 1.09, for access to information through e-learning platform is 4.21, for assessment of e-learning information sources is 5.22, actual information use via e-learning platform is 5.86 and for economical, ethical, and social issues in e-learning χ^2 value is 1.96 which is less than the critical value (α=0.05, d. f. = 4) 9.49.

6.3 Awareness of post graduate students and research scholars about e-learning

S. N.	Respondents	Opinion	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	P. G. Students	208 (77.03%)	0
2.	Research Scholars	62 (22.97%)	0
	Total	**270 (100%)**	**0**

Table-4: Awareness of post graduate students and research scholars about e-learning

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

The Table-4 gives the data about the awareness of post graduate students and research scholars about e-learning. It is found that, all post graduate students and research scholars were aware about e-learning.

6.4 Mode of Learning used by students and research scholars

S. N.	Respondents	Opinion			Total (%)
		E-learning	Class room learning	E-learning with class room learning	
1.	P. G. Students	68 (32.70%)	33 (15.86%)	107 (51.44%)	208 (100%)
2.	Research Scholars	22 (35.49%)	10 (16.13%)	30 (48.38%)	62 (100%)

Table-5: Mode of learning used by students and research scholars

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

From the Table-5 it is seen that, 51.44% post graduate students and 48.38% research scholars are the opinion that e-learning with the classroom learning is more preferred mode of learning while very few students and research scholars gives preference to class room learning.

6.5 Use of E-learning platform by students and research scholars

S. N.	Respondents	Opinion	
		Yes	No
1.	P. G. Students	208 (77.03%)	0
2.	Research Scholars	62 (22.97%)	0
	Total	**270 (100%)**	**0**

Table-6: Use of e-learning platform by students and research scholars

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

The Table-6 reveals that, all the post graduate students and the research scholars of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University are using e-learning platforms for their academic and research need.

6.6 Preference of e-learning given by students and research scholars

S. N.	Opinion	Respondents N (%)	
		P. G. Students	Research Scholars
1.	Convenience to use	36 (17.30%)	10 (16.13%)
2.	Easy to search and retrieve information	98 (47.12%)	28 (45.16%)
3.	Easy to take copies of valuable information	39 (18.75%)	8 (12.90%)
4.	Exhaustive information	35 (16.83%)	16 (25.81%)
	Total	**208 (100%)**	**62 (100%)**

Table-7: Preference of e-learning given by students and research scholars

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

The Table-7 gives the data about preferences given by respondents. The students and research scholars' were gives preference to e-learning than other learning methods. 47.12% post graduate students and 45.16% research scholars prefer e-learning because with the help of e-learning it is easy to search and retrieve information.

6.7 Purpose of e-learning

S. N.	Opinion	Respondents N (%)	
		P. G. Students	Research Scholars
1.	For getting research information	18 (8.65%)	36 (58.06%)
2.	For getting subject information	121 (58.18%)	6 (9.68%)
3.	For seminar presentations	10 (4.81%)	3 (4.84%)
4.	For the completion of assignments	26 (12.50%)	4 (6.45%)
5.	To gain current and general information	33 (15.86%)	13 (20.97%)
	Total	208 (100%)	62 (100%)

Table-8: Purpose of e-learning

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

From the Table-8 it is clear that, there are various purpose of e-learning among students and research scholars. 58.18% post graduate students mainly use e-resources and web resources for getting subject information while very few i.e. 4.81% were use for seminar presentation. It is also clear that, 58.06% of research scholars were used e-resources for getting research information.

6.8 Frequency of e-learning usage by students and research scholars

S. N.	Opinion	Respondents N (%)	
		P. G. Students	Research Scholars
1.	Almost every day	24 (11.54%)	23 (37.10%)
2.	Once a week	16 (7.69%)	10 (16.13%)
3.	Twice a week	78 (37.50%)	9 (14.52%)
4.	Once a month	32 (15.38%)	6 (9.68%)
5.	Twice a month	51 (24.52%)	9 (14.52%)
6.	Occasionally	7 (3.37%)	5 (8.05%)
	Total	208 (100%)	62 (100%)

Table-9: Frequency of e-learning usage by students and research scholars

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

From the Table-9 it is clear that, most of the post graduate students i.e. 37.50% were

engaged in e-learning twice a week where as 24.52% were engaged in e-learning twice a month. 37.10% research scholars were engaged in e-learning almost every day, while very few 8.05% were engaged occasionally in e-learning.

6.9 Level of satisfaction about e-learning platform and facilities

S. N.	Opinion	Respondents	
		P. G. Students	Research Scholars
1.	Not at all satisfied	21(10.10%)	7 (11.29%)
2.	Slightly satisfied	19 (9.13%)	5 (8.06%)
3.	Moderately satisfied	70 (33.65%)	17 (27.42%)
4.	Very satisfied	42 (20.19%)	24 (38.71%)
5.	Completely satisfied	56 (26.93%)	9 (14.52%)
	Total	208 (100%)	62 (100%)

Table-10: Level of satisfaction about e-learning platform and facilities

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

The Table-10 shows the various level of satisfaction of students and research scholars. It is clear that, 33.65% post graduate students were moderately satisfied, 20.19% were very satisfied and 26.93% were completely satisfied while, 38.71% research scholars were very satisfied with the facilities available for e-learning in Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University campus.

6.10 Problems of e-learning

S. N.	Opinion	Respondents	
		P. G. Students	Research Scholars
1.	Difficulty in accessing and downloading full text	28 (13.46%)	25 (40.32%)
2.	Difficulty in finding relevant information	14 (6.73%)	5 (8.06%)
3.	Lack of information of searching skill	21 (10.10%)	5 (8.06%)

Table-11: Problems of e-learning

4.	Lack of required web resources/databases	74 (35.58%)	6 (9.68%)
5.	Lack of time	12 (5.77%)	7 (11.29%)
6.	Less supportive staff	17 (8.17%)	5 (8.06%)
7.	Security problem	11 (5.29%)	6 (9.68%)
8.	Slow accessibility and internet connectivity	31 (14.90%)	3 (4.85%)
	Total	**208 (100%)**	**62 (100%)**

Source: Computed from the Survey Data

The Table-11 shows the various problems in using e-learning platforms. It is seen that, the lack of required web resources/ databases is the main problem faced by post graduate students of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra. It is also seen that, 40.32% research scholars face the problem in accessing and downloading full text.

7. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- The post graduate students of all teaching department and research scholars of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra are aware about e-learning and its usage.

- 51.44% post graduate students and 48.38% research scholars are the opinion that e-learning with the classroom learning is more preferred mode of learning

- 47.12% post graduate students and 45.16% research scholars prefer e-learning because with the help of e-learning it is easy to search and retrieve information.

- 58.18% post graduate students mainly use e-resources and web resources for getting subject

information while very few i.e. 4.81% were use for seminar presentation.

- It is found that, lack of required web resources/ databases is the main problem faced by post graduate students of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra. 40.32% research scholars face the problem in accessing and downloading full text.

8. CONCLUSION

Due to emergence of smart technologies and its use in higher education the education system changed. The nature and functioning of universities, colleges and other higher education institution were tremendously changed. The teaching and learning process also changed due to e-learning and its related technologies. In the present scenario of education e-learning is a rapidly developing field predominantly by fluidity and change at every step. The study is carried out to examine the attitude of the post-graduates students and research scholars towards various aspects of e-learning and also identify the problems in e-learning.

Some problems related with infrastructural facilities which supports e-learning have to be improved in University campus such as Wi-Fi facility, adequate number of e-resources in full text form etc. E-learning is a complex phenomenon with social, technical, economical, administrative, Managerial, and political considerations and consequences. There is also need of user training for optimum use of web and

electronic resources. It is seen that, authority and staff members of various departments of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University work hard and sincerely for successful conduction of e-learning programmes.

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