STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAMMES OF NATIONAL ONLINE DISTANCE EDUCATION SERVICE

By

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The Dissertation was submitted to the Department of Computer Science & Engineering of the University of Moratuwa in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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December 2009

University of Moratuwa

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bstract

According to the statistics of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, every year about 125,000 G.C.E. (A/L) qualified students fall into the category of "higher education opportunity less" due to the simple fact that the conventional university system does not have the capacity. Similarly, there is a large number of professionals scattered around the country who seek higher education opportunities as well as continuing professional development for which no opportunities are found in their respective areas. In addition, most of the employers operating out of Western Province need to train and re-train their employees in various disciplines which also need to be addressed. All these issues constrain opportunities available for continuing education. In this context online learning has been viewed as a way to increase access to higher and continuing education.

Presently, a state-of-the-art network has been established by the National Online Distance Education Service (NODES) in order to facilitate the delivery of online post secondary level programmes developed by the universities and other private and public sector post-secondary educational institutions.

The aim of the study is to find out the perceptions of stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators and experts) on effectiveness of online learning programmes of NODES in Sri Lanka. The study will examine the perceptions of stakeholders drawn from around 17 online programmes of disciplines like Medicine, Information Technology, Accounting, Culinary Arts, Agriculture, Business and Disaster Management, Quantity Surveying, Teacher Education, Library Science. It will also try to find out whether there is a relationship between demographic characteristics of stakeholders like gender, age, marital status, education, employment, income, district and effectiveness of online programs in terms of Accessibility and Quality.

Significance of the study stems from the effort taken to evaluate an initiative taken to address one of the major problems of the country which is to increase access for post secondary education. Also, it would help to improve quality/effectiveness of online distance education programmes to cater to the current demands from the labour market for employees with technical and employable skills.

The research utilized the survey approach and questionnaires were used to collect data from 216 students and 20 tutors/administrators/experts interviewed. Qualitative analysis of interview data and statistical analysis of questionnaire data are presented as the final output of the research.

The findings of this study indicates factors which facilitate and/or obstruct the effective implementation of online programmes to enable feasible strategies for effective implementation to be identified and shared with providers of online learning. Finally, recommendations are made on resolving the identified issues and to extend and improve the effectiveness of online distance education.

Declaration

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This dissertation was submitted to the Department of Computer Science & Engineering of the University of Moratuwa in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Business Administration in E-Governance.

The work included in this dissertation in part or whole has not been submitted for any other academic qualification at any institution.

I certify that I have not plagiarized the work of others or participated in unauthorized collusion when preparing this document.

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the outcome of the research project of MBA in e-Governance program offered by the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of University of Moratuwa. First and foremost, a very special note of thanks should go to my supervisors Prof. Chandra Gunawardene and Dr. Sanath Jayasena whose untiring support, dedication, commitment, patience, and expertise without any doubt paved way for this dissertation.

Secondly, I take this opportunity to thank the programme coordinators Mrs. Vishaka Nanayakkara and Dr. Chathura De Silva who have been very helpful throughout the two years of study. All the lecturers who taught and shared their expertise knowledge which was the key component in this program cannot be forgotten at this juncture. The Vice Chancellor, Dean/Engineering and all the staff of University of Moratuwa for academic and logistical support to us are very respectfully remembered here too.

I must mention here the kind assistance given by Prof. Kennedy Gunawardene and Dr. S. Somaratne in terms of research methodologies and analyzing techniques.

This MBA would not have been a success if not the support extended to me during the two years by my wife Chamila, daughter Yesini, and my mother who was always a pillar of strength in my life. It would be an injustice if I forget to acknowledge the kind assistance given to me by Madhushi, Dilani, Geeth, Manoj, Ravi, all NODES Access Center Assistants, NODES online students and all the experts who gave interviews during the survey.

MBA students are always not only learning from teachers but also sharing each others' experiences. In this sense I must be grateful to all my colleagues in the MBA in e-Governance and MBA in IT 2008/09 batches. Last but not least, I thank the ICTA for sponsoring this program for me and my colleagues from government organisations with the aim of empowering citizens of Sri Lanka in the area of e-Governance.

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List of Abbreviations

BIT – Bachelor of Information Technology

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CMA – Certified Management Accountants

DEMP – Distance Education Modernisation Project

FOSS – Free & Open Source Software

G.C.E. (A/L) – General Certificate in Education (Advanced Level)

ICT – Information & Communication Technology

ICTA – Information & Communication Technology Agency

IIT – Informatics Institute of Technology

IQSSL – Institute of Quantity Surveyors of Sri Lanka

LCDVS – Ladies College Department of Vocational Studies

LMS – Learning Management System

NODES – National Online Distance Education Service

NAC – NODES Access Center

NEC – National Education Commission

ODE – Open and Distance Education

ODL – Open and Distance Learning

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development

OUSL – Open University of Sri Lanka

PGIM – Post Graduate Institute of Medicine

SLLA – Sri Lanka Library Association

TVEC – Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission

UoC – University of Colombo

UoP - University of Peradeniya

UoM - University of Moratuwa

VPN – Virtual Private Network

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