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Priya Pallavi

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Dr. Niva Bara

Head of Department, Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Dr. BK Jha

Assistant Professor Cum Junior Scientist, Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Pankaj Kumar

Msc (Ag), Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Corresponding Author

Priya Pallavi

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension and Communication, Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Constraints faced by students of agricultural universities in usage of ICT

Priya Pallavi, Dr. Niva Bara, Dr. BK Jha and Pankaj Kumar

Abstract

The present research was conducted in three purposively selected agricultural universities i.e. Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Samastipur and Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bhagalpur. The study aimed at specifying the constraints faced by students of these agricultural universities during use of ICT tools. The sample included 30 students from each selected universities, thus the sample size of the study being 90. The data was collected through structured questionnaire along with observation, interaction and group discussion techniques. Respondents were asked to mention the constraints faced by them during the usage of ICT. The constraints faced by users of ICT i.e. students were studied in terms of technical, social-economic & psychological and ergonomical constraints. Against each constraint it was designed to obtain responses as regularly, occasionally and never for which, the scoring pattern was 2, 1 and 0 respectively. The results revealed that lack of technical skills, absence of conducive environment and inadequate internet facility as the important constraints faced by students towards the usage of ICT tools.

Keywords: constraints, conducive, inadequate, ergonomical, questionnaire

Introduction

ICT (Information and communication technology) is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, covering: radio, television, cell phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems, etc., as well as the various services and applications related with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning. It is the digital processing and the use of information through the use of electronic computers. It includes the storage, recovery, conversion and transmission of information (Ifueko Omoigui Okauru, 2011) ^[3]. Almost in all situations or tasks, we find the integration and use of technology to solve problems.

Chenoweth and Price (1997) ^[2] reported that “the main purpose of education is to provide a general experience in order to ensure that students acquire skills, knowledge and the ability to think critically and to perceive interdisciplinary relationships”. Oliver (2002) ^[8] found out in his studies that one of the goals of educational institutions is to ensure that graduates are information literate and can identify, locate and evaluate relevant information to satisfy their information needs. Usage of ICTs in education are widespread and are continually growing worldwide. It is generally believed that ICTs can empower teachers and learners, making significant contributions to learning and achievement. Academic and Professional growth of students can be enhanced by acquiring current information through the use of modern means of communication, mainly through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). It is however unfortunate that in spite of the enormous contributions of ICT in agricultural universities, there are still lots of constraints faced by the students. Therefore, the study aims at identifying the constraints faced by the students of agricultural universities in usage of ICT. It is clear that more research is needed to understand the complex links between ICTs, learning and achievements. Many students are reluctant to use ICT. Some of the reasons for this reluctance include poor software design, skepticism about the effectiveness of computers to improve learning outcomes, lack of administrative support, more time and effort needed to learn technology.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in purposively selected three agricultural universities i.e. Birsa Agricultural University, Ranchi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa,

Samastipur and Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bhagalpur. Thirty students from each university were selected as respondent. Thus the whole sample size from three Universities constituted of ninety respondents. The research design adopted for the present study was ex-post facto, since the phenomenon had already taken place. The study is based on a survey method for which a structured questionnaire was prepared and pretested. Besides this observation, interaction and group discussion techniques were also employed for data collection. Respondents were asked to mention the constraints faced by them during the usage of ICT. The constraints faced by users of ICT i.e. students were studied in terms of technical, social-economic & psychological and ergonomical constraints. Against each constraint it was designed to obtain responses as regularly, occasionally and never for which, the scoring pattern was 2, 1 and 0 respectively. In order to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of data, statistical tools like mean, frequency and weighted mean were used. Rank was given among constraints by the weighted mean score.

Results and Discussion

Every technology has pros and cons. The students of agricultural universities faced with constraints which have been categorized into technical, socio-economic & psychological and ergonomical constraints.

Table 1 indicates that students of agricultural universities faced a number of constraints. The first and foremost constraint was lack of technical skills, which was ranked I followed by monetary problem (II), lack of conducive

environment for e-learning in the society (III), inadequate internet facility (IV), reliability of the content (V) and read only content(VI). Low network on mobile phones and hand pain jointly obtained rank VII which were followed by head ache (VIII). The constraints such as cannot download full articles, social obligation to spend time with parents, unfavourable attitude of elderly person at home and eye pain jointly obtained the rank IX followed by difficulties in finding out the free and paid online services and back ache (X).

It could be inferred from the table that despite widespread use and promotional effects, the students feel lack of technical skill to make full use of ICT tools, which necessitates that a continuous offline and online training programme should be undertaken. Students in agricultural universities by and large belong to lower and middle income group family and possessing ICT gadgets like computer and smart phones may not be so easy. There has been absence of conducive e-learning environment wherein parents and teachers still promote the traditional mode of learning. Despite sincere efforts by government and private sector, internet connectivity is an issue. The websites are full of non-standardised content. The reliability of which is often doubted. The reliable, valid and complete contents are not available at the websites, demand money in lieu of complete content. There has been plethora of literature indicating ill effects on the user's body. However, the ergonomical constraints have obtained lowest rank which gives a hope that by removing the constraints we can see the tremendous effect on the use of ICT tools in teaching, research and extension.

Table 1: Constraints faced by the students of agricultural universities in the use of ICT tools

Sl. No.	Constraints	BAU, Ranchi Weighted Mean score	Dr. RPCAU, Pusa Weighted Mean score	BAU, Sabour Weighted Mean score	Total weighted mean score	Rank
A	Technical constraints					
1	Inadequate internet facility	0.96	1.1	0.96	1.00	IV
2	Read only content	1.06	0.66	0.96	0.89	VI
3	Cannot download full articles	0.76	0.73	0.76	0.75	IX
4	Difficulties in find out the free and paid online services	0.63	0.60	0.83	0.68	X
5	Low network on mobile phones	0.90	0.96	0.70	0.85	VII
6	Unwanted service activation in mobile	0.43	0.4	0.43	0.42	XI
7	Reliability of the content	1.06	1.03	0.9	0.99	V
8	Lack of technical skill	1.66	1.60	1.63	1.63	I
B	Social-economic and psychological constraints					
9	Lack of conducive environment for e-learning in the society	1.00	1.10	1.00	1.03	III
10	Social obligation to spend time with parents	0.93	0.63	0.67	0.75	IX
11	Unfavorable attitude of elderly person at home	0.66	0.76	0.87	0.75	IX
12	Monetary Problem	1.13	1.13	1.06	1.10	II
13	Low awareness of ICT among siblings and friends	0.70	0.63	0.30	0.54	XI
C	Ergonomical constraints					
14	Eye pain	0.76	0.76	0.67	0.75	IX
15	Back ache	0.63	0.60	0.83	0.68	X
16	Head ache	0.83	0.83	0.76	0.80	VIII
17	Hand pain	0.76	0.76	0.99	0.85	VII

Conclusion

The present study highlighted the existing situation of constraints faced by students in usage of ICT of agricultural universities. It can be concluded from the findings of the study, that there are still lots of obstacles faced by students. It clearly indicates that, still there is a large scope, to exploit the potential of ICT among the respondents. Most of the respondents have had many constraints in using ICT tools. The availability of Internet facilities was not much

satisfactory due to many constraints associated with them In order to exploit the fullest advantage of Internet facility, the present study concludes and suggests that the university administration should relook into the matter of creating better. Internet facility and encourage the use of other ICT tools among the students and researchers, as it will definitely result into the betterment of academic environment of state agricultural universities.

The findings revealed that lack of technical skills, absence of conducive environment and inadequate internet facility as the important constraints towards the usage of ICT tools. Hence it is imperative that adequate internet facilities should be provided to students and regular online and offline training programmes should be organised so that a proper e-learning environment is created in the institutes. To overcome these problems facilities like proper broadband connection or Wi-Fi should be provided by for every department and officials. Computers should also be made available for every students and researchers and basics training should be given to help them utilize the tools without obstacles.

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