

## **Usage of the Smart Phones for Learning Purposes by Students Who Follows ‘Diploma in Commonwealth Youth Development Programmes’ in the Colombo And Batticaloa Centres of the Open University of Sri Lanka**

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**Abstract:** *Smart phones and other mobile digital devices, such as tablets, can be surprisingly useful didactic resources for developing subjects in both distance and face-to-face university studies. But many researchers note that, using smart phone as a tool in the distance education mode is not successful (Huber & Ebner 2013). Therefore this study attempts to find the usage of the smart phones. The students who follow the Diploma in commonwealth youth development programmes were considered as the population of this study and 74 students from the population selected as the sample of this study. The survey method was used in this study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the sample. The data was analyzed in descriptive statistical methods. The finding shows the usage of smart phones related with distance education support to increase students learning, social interactions, collaborative learning, and socialization of students etc. The freedom in the learning environment. In the coming decade smart phones will be a main learning tool in the distance learning system. Thus the Open University of Sri Lanka has to take immediate action to promote the usage of smart phones in the learning environment. Other universities also have to motivate their students to use the smart phones for educational purposes.*

**Keywords:** *Smartphone, Open and Distance Learning and Educational technology*

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### **I. Introduction**

Smartphones and other mobile digital devices, such as tablets, can be surprisingly useful didactic resources for developing subjects in both distance and face-to-face university studies. They may, moreover, be used as an instrument conducive to educational and personal interaction, fostering relationships between students and their professors (Bedall-Hill, 2010; Chayko, 2008; Franklin, 2011; Johnson, Adams Beker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014; Oulasvirta, Wahlström, & Ericsson, 2011; UNESCO, 2013). Students experience the digital environment in a very tactile and personal way through a wide variety of mobile devices (i.e., smartphones and tablets) those which can be used and converted into collaborative learning practices. Smartphones are increasingly becoming ever-present, penetrating and transforming everyday social practices and space. These practices can be complemented with text documents in different formats, audiovisual contents with mini-videos, micro blogging applications, and social networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). Smartphones are no longer only a tool for communication, but in many cases have become an instrument of people’s social and work life, and possibly, a powerful instrument in academic life. Therefore, secondary and higher education in developed and developing countries are now trying to adopt the use of smartphones in the learning process from different perspectives and teaching methods (Johnson et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2013).

The Sri Lankan population was 20,771,000 in 2013, but 22,123,000 phones were used in same year. On the other hand, Sri Lanka crossed the 3 Million internet user milestone and made a prediction that Sri Lanka will cross the 4 Million internet user’s mark at the end of year 2013. After the end of 2013 to until now there are no any official published reports for latest internet penetration statistics for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka used year on year growth rates to predict a 4.5 million internet users as of the end of the first quarter year of 2014.

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) follows the Open Distance Learning (ODL) education system. The major challenge in this system is that there is very little very less of students-teacher interaction. Therefore, to overcome this challenge OUSL can use communication tools to increase interaction between students and teachers such as computers smartphones. OUSL has been started to use the smartphone as an educational resource of students and teacher (i.e sending SMS, E-mails, searching notes etc.) According the above mentioned background researcher has conducted a study related to smartphones and education.

## **II. Problem Statement**

There are many researchers who noted that, using smart phones as a tool in the distance education mode is not successful. Contrary to the above mentioned is the statement that 'Mobile devices can provide a level of reach, scope and immediacy that is largely unattainable through classroom environments' (Huber & Ebner 2013). Many learners in developing countries have trouble accessing the internet and experiences difficulties in affording its cost. With the increased usage of Smart phones, learners have easy to the for internet without much cost. As a result, the usage of smart phones for educational purposes is becoming a trend among students. However studies have shown that the usage of smart phones is not an effective tool for learning purposes (Yousef & Hamideh, 2013). Sri Lanka is a developing country and the Open University of Sri Lanka uses the Open and Distance Learning mode. In this case technology learning tools play a main role as teaching learning tools. Therefore, in the study we will investigate the usage of smartphone in ODL system of the Open University of Sri Lanka.

## **III. Literature Review**

The Millennials have the distinction of being the first generation that has not known life without a mobile phone. Keep in mind, their definition of "phone" includes telephone, camera, media player and computer. Nowadays phones (smartphone) are used as a multimedia tool and for multi purposes such as talking, visual, finding location, browsing, educational equipment etc. The Open University of Sri Lanka also uses mobile phone as an equipment of educational purposes. In the past decade, the Internet has spawned many innovations and services that stem from its interactive character. The emergence of ubiquitous and inexpensive microprocessors and wireless networks has led to the wide deployment of mobile devices that allow us to access and to handle information almost anytime and anywhere (Roussos et al., 2005).

Information technology provides educational institutions an exceptional opportunity to increase student enthusiasm and enhance learning outcomes. Furthermore smartphones support collaborative learning and the engagement of students in the class improve student learning performance. Therefore we highly recommend these tools in educational settings to support the learning process. (Roblyer & Wiencke, 2003). These tools support to socialization, development of human relationships, familiarising with technology, supporting learning etc.

Mobile phones need very little infrastructure, and are low-power devices that can be used in places where the availability of electricity is not very reliable and are the fastest growing technology platform in the developing world (CNN. Weapon against epidemics: Cell phones, 2009). In addition, mobile phones are inherently interactive in nature, as compared to TV and radio, so are the most suitable technology to use to access and share content in rural areas. There are nearly 34000 students who have got studentship in the calendar year that are from urban and rural areas, however students from both urban and rural areas can use the smartphones easily in Sri Lanka. Now, the choice of device is clear: Laptops are not sustainable. But smartphones are sustainable and cost-wise smartphones are more in concert with the emergence of mobile technology as a dominant technology in the coming decade. Therefore students can manage their cost of learning and can learn well.

According to Clough et al., (2007), researchers and educators have adopted smartphones and other devices as tools that support and enhance learning experience. According to the above literature review there are several positive impacts. Based on the above reviews in this study researcher going to investigate or identify students who are following the diploma and how far they are effectively using mobile phones for theirs studies.

## **IV. Methodology**

### **Population And Sample**

The students who follow the Diploma in common wealth youth development programmes were considered as the population for this study. Out of the 197 population, there were 48 students from the Colombo regional centre of the OUSL and 24 students who studied at the Batticaloa regional centre of OUSL who were selected randomly as the sample for this study.

### **Design**

A comprehensive questionnaire was used to collect data from the students. This study used the quantitative research design. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software and diagrams, tables, figures and numbers and percentage were used in the analysis part.

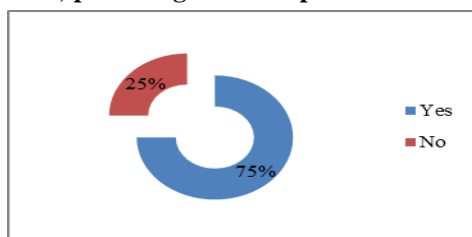
### **Objectives:**

This study investigates the usage of smartphones for learning purposes by students who follow the 'diploma in commonwealth youth development programme'.

**Findings:**

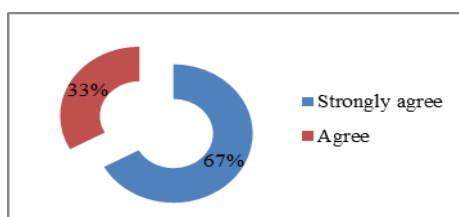
In the selected sample 75% of students used smartphones and 25% of students did not use smartphones, in this case, the 75% of students who used smartphones were selected as a sample.

**Figure-1; percentage of smartphone used students**



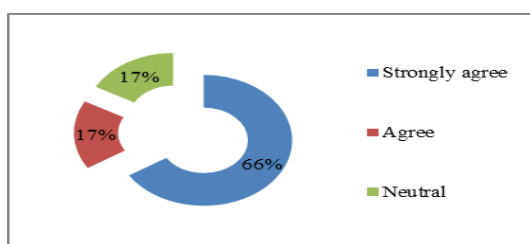
The smartphones helped them to gain psychological satisfaction and social interactions with other students and teachers. All students agreed that smart phones support to communicate faster and easily with others by using applications such as Facebook, Skype, Viber, whatsapp, line etc.

**Figure-2; smartphones help work and communicate faster with others**



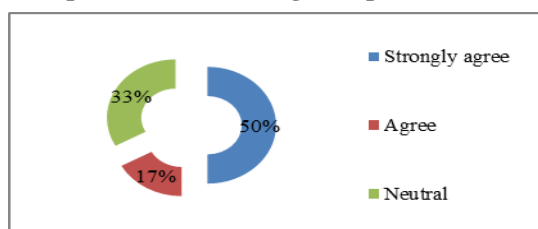
According to the students' answers, they used the smartphones for developing their language and language related skills with help of apps (i.e. dictionary apps, translating apps). More than 83% of students agreed that they used the smartphone to update their knowledge and learning new knowledge related to this diploma course.

**Figure-3; usage of the smartphones for learning and updating knowledge**



Most of students used the smartphone as a searching source related to with this diploma course (i.e. text, videos, voice cuttings, pictures, diagrams etc.) and they use smartphones to share above mentioned sources with other students and teachers. Students writing assignment with help of smartphones.

**Figure-4: Usage of the smartphones for searching text, pictures, videos, diagrams etc.**



However some students had challenges related with using smartphones such as wasting time and money, having unnecessary problems etc. In these findings averagely, students get more benefits related with leaning process through using smartphones.

### **V. Conclusions/ Recommendations:**

Conclusion of a major research finding in Singapore, for was that distance education smartphones *are* sustainable, cost-wise, and smartphones are more in concert with the emergence of mobile technologies as a dominant technology in the coming decade (Ministry of Education, 2010). The usage of smartphone was related with distance education support to increase the students learning, social interactions, collaborative learning, and socialization of students etc. and freedom in learning environment. In coming decade smartphones will be a main learning tool in distance learning system. Thus the Open University of Sri Lanka has to take immediate action to promote the usage of smartphone in learning environment. Other universities also have to motivate their students to use the smartphones for educational purposes.

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