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The Role of ICT in Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Visual and Performing Arts Degrees at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how the University of the Visual and Performing Arts' (UVPA) Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) degree programs are affected by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subject. ICT integration into arts education has grown in importance as digital technologies continue to revolutionize creative processes. This study explores the ways in which ICT supports professional growth, artistic expression, and curricular improvement in the visual and performing arts. The study evaluates the experiences and the opinions of the academic staff and students on the usefulness, difficulties, challenges, and possibilities of ICT subject using qualitative techniques, such as interviews with academics and students, using review reports, study techniques, various dimensions of the subject, and curriculum analysis. The results show that the impact on ICT in Visual and Performing Arts subjects provides new opportunities for innovation, teamwork, hybrid learning environment, and international outreach while enhancing the quality of arts degrees. Further, there are some drawbacks as well, including inadequate infrastructure, a lack of training, and resistance to change to new advancement of technologies.

KEYWORDS:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Visual and Performing Arts Degree, hybrid method, Learning Management System (LMS), online resources

INTRODUCTION

University of the Visual and Performing Arts is the only university in Sri Lanka which offers honours degrees in the Visual and Performing Arts areas: Dance & Drama, Music and Visual Arts. Information and Communication Technology is a subject which deals with the integration and application of information technology (IT) and communication technologies for teaching, learning, research and administration. By the exploration of these two subject areas, it has been identified that there is an impact on the ICT subject for the effective conducting of Visual and Performing Arts degrees of the university. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to find the role of ICT subject for the Performing Arts degrees in the University of the Visual and Performing Arts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Authors referred several research papers related to the study area. In this phase, the main purpose is to get a clear understanding of the nature of the two areas, ICT and Visual and Performing Arts with the idea of identifying the usage and impact of ICT in education, usage and impact of ICT in Visual and Performing Arts, online resource utilization for art field and employability for the degree holders of Visual and Performing Arts.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON USAGE AND IMPACT OF ICT IN EDUCATION:

Raja and Nagasubramani discussed how the use of technology has made the process of teaching and learning more enjoyable. (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018) Moreover the paper discussed the impact of ICT on education such as it increased active learning, collaborative and cooperative learning, creative learning, Integrative learning and evaluative learning. Advantages of ICT in education are: it makes students more excited to learn, help students with busy schedules, freedom to work at home on their own time, train students to learn new technology skills they can use later in the workplace, decrease

paper and photocopying costs, and promotes the concept of “green revolution”. In addition to this, paper discussed the disadvantages of ICT in education such as many experts and experienced people say that, due to such technology in education, students imagination is affected, their thinking ability is reduced, sometime it’s also time-consuming from teacher’s point of view, it is costly to install such technology, there can be health issues too when used over limit, and some students can’t afford modern computer technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON USAGE AND IMPACT OF ICT IN THE AREA OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS:

An (2019) discusses the interrelationship between IT and Art. Further, this paper explains the fact that the compulsory requirement of introducing technology for aesthetic education in China. It further explores the possibility of reforming the college aesthetic education in China using IT. As an example the author has analyzed image aesthetic features using computer algorithms and highlighted the quality of the results due to the computer technology. These research findings will provide a theoretical guidance for the modernization of aesthetic education in colleges while enhancing the quality of education of the students.

Ilic argues in his book that ICT has revolutionized the education of Visual Art by addressing the limitations of traditional teaching methods by providing pedagogical tools which facilitates a more dynamic, interactive and multimedia-rich learning environment in the classroom. His argument is persuasive and well-structured for integrating digital tools into visual art education. He further pointed out that practitioners and policymakers would benefit from follow-up studies that address implementation challenges and explore outcomes across diverse educational settings (Ilic, 2019).

The continuous development of digital technologies has transformed the educational process to a digital platform (González-Zamar et al., 2020). This paper further emphasizes that the way of teaching and learning is influenced by the technology while giving a more interactive mode. The aim of this research was to identify global trends in digital education especially in the visual and artistic education using

the bibliometric technique for 1291 documents. As a result of this research, the key current and future lines of research were detected. Moreover, the most productive territories in this research topic are the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, China, and Australia. This study has also detected the most significant areas of knowledge where publications are classified: social sciences, computer science, and arts and humanities.

Carvalho et al. (2024) discussed about the requirement of new educational model using the experiences at the Corona (2020-2021) time period in Portugal as a part of a broader project that aims to develop a new pedagogical model that can be integrated into Higher Education curricula. At the time of corona there was a growing need felt by the performing artists to turn to digital environments: uploading creative products such as artwork, recordings of theater plays, creating performances using online mode, live streaming of home rehearsals by facing new creative challenges as artists and groups of artists. Within the time of Corona, in the higher education context, despite previous advances in e-learning and blended learning, most academic institutions responded to the immediate nature of the pandemic and converted their classes/methodologies to online mode using video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet. In this paper, it is subjected to use these experiences and create a new model of educational pedagogy to fulfill the current requirement of the higher education system. Authors discussed the idea of using the crossing of experiences between the teaching and artistic world from a methodological point of view to use questionnaires which applied to the academic context and interviews carried out with artists and performers. As a result of this paper it has been pointed out that despite the constraints, some elements can be seen as positive, opening new opportunities in performative and teaching practices for the future ahead.

Shehani Nipunika, (2023) discussed online music learning as one of the learning trends in the world. She emphasized the challenges and constraints arose in online music learning among higher-education students in the Faculty of Music at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts (UVPA), Sri Lanka using a quantitative case study methodology. After analyzing the data, it was identified that

participants encountered challenges with technical issues, a lack of interconnection between the student and the lecturer, and a lack of motivation to listen to the lesson due to isolation. Results of this research revealed that although participants faced these challenges and constraints of the availability of instruments, they had overcome it. Accordingly, it will highlight the fact that the integration of technology with education, especially in the field of music, dance and drama and visual arts would give a real impact enhancing the quality of the VPA degree programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON ONLINE RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN ART FIELD:

Yasanthini and Santharooban have studied how visual and performing arts students at Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Studies, Eastern University, Sri Lanka, use online resources and the obstacles they face (Yasanthini and Santharooban, 2022). Sixteen students participated in a focus group discussion, and 246 randomly chosen undergraduates completed a questionnaire survey administered by the authors. According to the findings, students mostly use websites, mobile applications, social media, and Google apps for academic purposes. Students' academic disciplines are closely linked to these internet resources. Students studying Visual Technological Art are strongly linked to Instagram, Google SlideShare, Google Art and Culture, Google Photo, Google Drive, Art Galleries, and Museum Collections. YouTube and Viber are strongly linked to the dance discipline, whereas YouTube and Carnatic Music Apps are strongly linked to the discipline of music. However, YouTube, university and library websites, and general Google searches are the main sources of information for drama and theater students. Inadequate internet connectivity was the main obstacle to obtaining media content. Performance-based research found that using online resources led to a loss of creativity and traditional teacher-student connections. The study suggests that in order to support the current curricula, the library should help students become aware of the relevant online performance-based resources.

Hong and Jo conducted study on the various kinds of online sources

and the standards used to assess how helpful online content is for assisting students in learning about and comprehending geographical ideas and procedures (Hong and Jo, 2017). In addition to standard course materials like textbooks, online information can be a useful resource. Higher education regularly and extensively uses a variety of online resources, such as web pages, articles, data, videos, and papers. Students can also learn and comprehend geographical concepts and processes with the aid of a variety of online resources, including maps, photographs, videos, and images. In this study, 65 undergraduate students taking a fall 2015 world geography course were instructed to look up 20 online resources on recent fluctuations in oil prices and then rate the sources according to how helpful they were for learning about the subject. Online news sites, company websites, newspaper and magazine websites, broadcasting websites, academic journals, educational websites, radio stations, Wikipedia and online encyclopedias, individual blogs and websites, and online discussion forums are the sources of the findings. Additionally, they disclosed that if students use any of the resources, they do so only if the website is user-friendly, thorough, reliable, organized, engaging, and up to date.

Girakaduwa has studied how the University of the Visual and Performing Arts library's e-resources and services are used and what issues arise when using them (Girakaduwa, 2019). One of the main information sources for research, teaching, and learning activities nowadays is electronic resources. However, most library users lack the necessary knowledge and abilities to utilize the computerized materials and services. Therefore, it is crucial to gauge how library users use e-resources and services, as well as any problems or difficulties they may encounter, before launching awareness campaigns and orientations. Users of the UVPA library made up the study's population, and participants were chosen at random. A total of 450 library users were chosen as the sample from the population. The core data was gathered through interviews and observations, while structured online questionnaires served as the primary data gathering tool. According to the survey, most library users (72.7%), including both staff and students, are aware of the e-resources and services the library offers. However, just 62.2% of library patrons took advan-

tage of the electronic resources and services. OPAC (searching and renewing service), library Web-resources (website), and past exam paper downloading facilities were utilized by the majority of respondents (62.2%, 60.9%, and 57.8%, respectively). Furthermore, it was shown that 46% of those surveyed made use of the Digital Repository System and e-journal.

In contrast to the other services Database and email service utilization was quite modest. 62.2% of participants expressed satisfaction with the usability and usefulness of e-resources and services. The results showed that a lack of infrastructure facilities, a lack of user education and awareness initiatives, a lack of IT skills and knowledge, and English language hurdles were the main causes of the reduced use of e-resources and services. As a result, libraries ought to take an active part by launching carefully thought-out user awareness and education initiatives, building out their infrastructure, and purchasing additional e-resources. To get the most out of the e-resources and services, experts also recommend updating the curricula by including more practical sessions and setting up email or mobile alert update services.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON EMPLOYABILITY IN THE AREA OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS:

One of the biggest problems in modern society is unemployment. Employers' need for the same appears to be outpaced by the rate at which the number of job searchers is growing. This makes it more difficult for businesses to choose qualified employees from the graduate pool. In these circumstances, it is the responsibility of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), graduates, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure that the employability needs and expectations of graduates are met. For graduates to be employable in SMEs, they must possess a variety of skills. However, given the increasing sophistication of today's society, graduates are increasingly in need of ICT abilities.

Samaradiwakara and Gunawardena (2017) discussed the application of ICT skills in higher education in Sri Lanka. Authors emphasized the fact that ICT would equip graduates with a sound techno-

logical background to face the challenges in the job market. It is elaborated about the issues with university students such as reluctance to learn ICT course modules while learning their main subject stream especially in the fine arts and humanities faculties in the universities. In this paper, use of ICT by undergraduates, factors related to ICT use in universities, strategies to promote using ICT in universities are discussed in detail. It has been pointed out that nearly 80% of the applicants who were graduates in Humanities and Arts did not possess the skills needed. Semi structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at the four selected universities and various other fields in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, there were different thoughts from three categories of staff: ICT Lectures, Instructors, Marketing Managers and the students in State universities regarding the requirement of ICT skills in the competitive job market in Sri Lanka. According to the data collected, it has been revealed that basic ICT is an essential component for today's job market and that employers believe that a graduate can easily capture the demand by him/herself for their position with advanced ICT skills.

Given that ICT technicalities are necessary to carry out a number of fundamental tasks in the workplace, it is noted that the globalized economy creates an additional demand on graduates to possess these skills (Mushi, 2020). Numerous studies have examined the impact of ICT skills on employment. This paper discusses how ICT is necessary even in non-technical industries like manufacturing, construction, and agriculture, at least for graduates with a baseline skill set. However, it's unclear what the fundamental abilities are in this situation. Using Value-Focused Thinking (VFT), this study attempts to investigate and comprehend the kinds of fundamental ICT skills required as well as the importance of each ICT skill on employability. To determine the basic and intermediate concerns about ICT skills on employability, VFT employs in-depth interviews. Accordingly, this study explored five main fundamental issues which have to be handled effectively by the stakeholders to make sure that ICT graduates are more employable within the Small and SMEs. The outcome of this research will propose guidelines to the SMEs, graduates and HEIs through objectives which should be achieved.

Jusoh et al. (2011) examines the expectations gaps of recent gradu-

ates in Malaysia in order to close the research gap and add to the body of information already in existence. This study is interesting since it offers a comprehensive view of the list of expectation gaps and how they affect new graduates' commitment and job satisfaction. Since there are expectations gaps, it is crucial that businesses, higher education institutions, and graduates themselves solve them effectively and efficiently rather than solely relying on government action. In this context, various measures suggested in this study can be taken as guidance to reduce the expectation gaps. Failure to do so will have a severe effect on the graduates' job satisfaction, commitment, and more importantly, their performance. Due to the limitations of this study, the findings ought to be interpreted with care. First, the study was conducted on a relatively small sample in Malaysia and thus, limits the generalizability of the findings.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach to thoroughly examine how the Visual and Performing Arts degree programs are affected by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) subject. To guarantee a comprehensive grasp of the subject, the study integrates qualitative data gathering and analysis methods such as interviews with academics and students, using review reports, study techniques, various dimensions of the subject, and curriculum analysis. Accordingly, research was employed using a descriptive and exploratory design to examine how ICT is integrated into the academic curriculum, teaching methodologies, and creative practices in Visual and Performing Arts disciplines. The study also explores perceptions of students and academic staff toward the effectiveness and challenges of ICT in their fields. It mainly analyzed the procedures and mechanisms used by the academic staff for the teaching of this subject for the degree programs in the university within the last 20 years duration. Document Analysis related to existing course syllabi and assignments were reviewed to assess the extent to which ICT components are embedded in the curriculum. Collected data through above methods were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and insights.

DATA COLLECTION

Authors gathered the data from the following stipulated questions using the above methods.

RQ1 The relationship between the subject of Information Technology and Visual and Performing Arts subject?

The University offers Information and Communication subjects for all levels of the visual and performing arts degree programs. For the first-year students, digital applications for performing arts are offered. There, it has included the fundamental concepts in computers and the knowledge of basic computer applications such as word processing, spreadsheet design and presentations design because those skills are essential for their entire journey of the University for doing assignments or projects, budget preparations for their creative works and report or thesis writing.

The Multimedia Technologies course module is offered for second-year students in the university. This subject is very useful for students in the visual and performing arts field because it qualifies them with the skills to create posters, banners, advertisements, invitation cards for their dance and music performances as well as art exhibitions. Moreover, the module enables students to create soundtracks and video clips for their artistic works. Also, learning this module helps students to enhance their design skills in areas such as book cover and magazine designs.

Moreover, a web application module is offered for Digital Portfolio Management for second-year students. This module enhances their skills in the areas of design and developing digital platforms to manage their portfolio. Third-year students are offered a digital marketing module and statistical application module for performing arts research. Digital marketing module enhances their theoretical and practical knowledge of how to use web, social media platforms to promote their creative works to the general public. Statistics module develops the third-year undergraduates' IT competencies in theoretical and practical knowledge in the area of statistics which can be

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used for Performing Arts research. For the final-year students, there is a module called Computer Based project in visual and performing arts to apply the acquired IT skills during the study period in relation to their contexts.

Hence the above Information Technology based course modules are very essential for undergraduates to uplift their knowledge in the field of visual and performing arts and to bridge the knowledge gap and make new technological based artistic works which are highly standard than using only the traditional methods.

RQ2 What are the available facilities in the university to offer the subject effectively?

ICT subject was introduced for degrees of the UVPA in the year 2006 under the center for multidisciplinary studies with the purpose of enhancing the quality of the degrees by the first Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. Sarath Amunugama. Accordingly, IT Course modules for all the levels in the degrees of three faculties: Faculty of Music, Faculty of Dance and Drama and Faculty of Visual Arts were introduced as compulsory basis for level 01 and level 02 and auxiliary basis for level 03 and level 04. In the year 2010, IT Center was established for the university under the purview of the late Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Jayasena Kottagoda. In the year 2022 August, there was a milestone for the history of IT teaching and learning in the University after establishing the department of information technology under the Faculty of Dance and Drama. After identification of the requirement of computer laboratories for the practical and self-assessment of the students, five computer laboratories were established in three faculties (two laboratories in the Visual Arts, one large laboratory in the Dance and Drama faculty and two laboratories in the Music Faculty). Furthermore, IT services such as internet, email, web, eduroam and LMS are provided for students and staff of the University for teaching, learning, research and administration. With laboratory facilitation, the practical infrastructure requirement was fulfilled to support the understanding of theoretical knowledge provided for the students under the IT modules offered under the degree programmes.

RQ3 The impact of the Information Technology for the educational activities during the COVID 19 period in Sri Lanka.

Studying Information Technology was a big help for the Visual and Performing arts undergraduate students during the COVID 19 period. University conducted online lectures through synchronous online teaching and learning platforms: ZOOM, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts and Google Meet. The University's Learning Management System was used for distance education. So, even though subjects such as dance, music and arts consisted of traditional methods for learning, during this period students learned them through online modes. Assignments and Examinations are also conducted in an online environment such as submission of written files, images of conducted art works, recorded video clips of student's dance items and recorded audio clips. Moreover for the entrance of the University of Visual and Performing Arts, there is an aptitude test for the dance, drama, music and Visual Arts streams. This complete process such as application calling, application submission, answer submission and marking was conducted online through Google forms.

RQ4 How can IT skills be utilized for hunting the new knowledge of subject areas of Visual and Performing Arts?

This matter is so crucial and timely. Students are required to search for new knowledge related to their subjects efficiently and effectively. Actually, this is a case in which students have to spend money, time and space as it would require data searching, data collection, analysis & interpretation using the latest technologies and methods. ICT knowledge is very important in this context to fulfil the above requirement effectively. Let us take a few examples and try to understand the idea properly. For the information collection, visiting the library physically is the normal scenario happening in the academic institutions. But, with the advancement of ICT technology, the concept of digital library has been introduced for referencing libraries rather than physically visiting which is a time consuming job in Sri Lanka. Further, the information search through google

and other web searching methods are user friendly and easy methods compared to referencing other printed media including books, magazines etc. Another trending area is artificial intelligence which majority of the people are using for day today requirements, especially for the academic related activities. By following these mechanisms, rooms are opened for researchers to find their information needs effectively. Accordingly, they have clear and correct pathways to proceed with their research through IT skills. Due to this digital space created through ICT, all the economic and other barriers are removed so that all of the students have equal chances to fulfill their final achievements.

RQ5 The effect of the Information Technology skills for the job industry locally and Internationally?

University has an annual output of approximately 600 graduates. But the University's graduate's employment rate is not very satisfactory. University's unemployment rate is significantly high. The majority is employed as government school teachers. Hence learning Information Technology related modules are very important to find jobs in their career life. Web developer, web content editor, web designer, creative designer, UI/UX developer are some identified jobs in the IT Industry to which the UVPA graduates are likely to fit locally as well as internationally.

RQ6 What are the challenges of the IT department to offer the IT subject smoothly?

When challenges are considered, there are two main management aspects, namely physical and human resources required for the effective management of subject implementation. These two aspects are managed to minimize the effect for the course implementation with the help of university authority. But, the political, economic and social changes of the country will directly affect the smooth management of these areas. Our goal is to face these challenges and drive our path forward with the commitment of the staff of the IT department, under the guidance and instructions of relevant officers in the

university authority.

Findings of the Research

Data retrieved through above questions were analyzed through the different methodologies. As a result, it has been identified following impact on the Information and Communication Technology subject for the Visual and Performing Arts Degrees in the University of the Visual and Performing Arts. Enhanced online teaching and learning experience:

The integration of ICT into the curriculum has significantly improved the online teaching and learning environment. Students now have access to learning materials, recorded lectures, and digital resources leading to their artistic disciplines. Interactive platforms enable real-time feedback and engagement, while multimedia tools support a more dynamic and creative virtual classroom experience.

ENHANCED HYBRID LEARNING METHODOLOGY:

The adoption of a hybrid learning model combining face-to-face practical classes with digital components has allowed for greater flexibility and accessibility. Students can participate in studio-based sessions while benefiting from online tutorials, project-based assessments, and collaborative tools. This blended approach supports diverse learning styles and encourages the practical application of ICT tools in both physical and virtual environments.

COLLABORATIVE AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING:

The concept of collaborative learning means working in a group of two or more individuals to achieve a common goal / objective. Collaboration can either be achieved through traditional or technological approaches through ICT. In the traditional perspective within the domain of academic programmes, a group of individuals (a team) can work within a particular place in the form of a group project / assignment or any other assigned task related to an academic programme. In the technological approach, collaborative working can happen through many different ways such as conference calls, video conferences and online software platforms. These technological ap-

proaches are more efficient than the traditional approach as it will remove practical barriers such as physical appearance, travel costs, time saving etc.

SHIFT FROM TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES TO DIGITAL SPACE:

Due to the advancement of ICT technology, digital space such as social media, web and other online platforms are there for the creative learners and artists to showcase their products effectively to the general public without experiencing space, time and money issues. Actually, on one hand this is a paradigm shift which happened due to the technological advancements through ICT. With the advancement of Artificial Intelligence, this impact was thoroughly affected to Visual and Performing Arts Studies as several new digital technologies (software tools) have been introduced for manipulating creative productions in the areas of Dance & Drama, Music and Visual Arts. Accordingly, learners as well as practitioners (students and lecturers) are adapting to these AI technologies as a supplementary tool for their teaching and learning process.

ADDRESSED THE SPACE ISSUE IN THE UNIVERSITY:

By incorporating more online and hybrid learning methods within the ICT subject, the University has effectively alleviated physical space constraints. Virtual classrooms and digital collaboration platforms reduce the need for large, on-campus gatherings, allowing better management of limited facilities and studio spaces.

ENHANCED STUDENT'S DIGITAL SKILLS:

The course also focuses on equipping students with essential digital skills such as digital marketing and social media management. These competencies empower students in the visual and performing arts to promote their work, engage wider audiences, and build professional networks using contemporary online platforms.

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the research is to find out the role of ICT in enhancing teaching and learning Visual and Performing Arts degrees at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts. Collected data through stipulated research questions using interviews, focus groups of academics and students, study techniques, curriculum analysis was thematically analyzed. The results show that the impact on ICT in Visual and Performing Arts subjects provides new opportunities for innovation, teamwork, and international outreach while enhancing the quality of Art degrees which will make students a competitive demand for the current job market in local and foreign countries. In addition to that it was identified that there are some shortcomings and challenges in the area of human and physical infrastructure for the smooth conducting of ICT course modules in the degree programs at the university.

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