

Exploring the Potential of Mobile Learning in Distance Higher Education: A Case Study of the University of Jammu, Jammu, and Kashmir

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Abstract : Distance Education has emerged as a viable alternative to serve the higher educational needs of the socially and economically disadvantaged people of the remote, rural areas of Jammu region. The University of Jammu is a National Accreditation, and Assessment Council accredited, A+ university and has been accorded graded autonomy by the University Grants Commission. It is a dual mode university offering academic programmes through the regular departments and through the Directorate of Distance Education. The Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu still uses printed study material as a mode of instructional delivery. The development of technologies has assured increased interaction and communication for distance learners throughout the distance open learning institutions. Though it is tempting and convenient to adopt technology already being used by others, it may not prove effective for the simple reason that two institutions may be unlike in some respect. The use of technology must be conceived in view of the needs of the learners; geographical socio-economic-cultural and technological contexts and financial, administrative and academic resources of the institution. Mobile learning (m-learning) is a novel approach to knowledge acquisition and dissemination and is gaining global attention. It has evolved as one of the useful channels of distance learning promoting interaction between learners and teachers. It is felt that the Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu also needs to adopt new technologies to provide more effective academic and information support to distance learners in order to keep them motivated and also to develop self-learning skills. The chief objective of the research on which this paper is based was to measure the opinion of the distance learners of the DDE, the University of Jammu about the merits of mobile learning. It also explores their preferences for implementing mobile learning. The survey research design of descriptive research has been used. The data was collected from 400 distance learners enrolled with undergraduate and post-graduate programmes using self-constructed questionnaire containing five-point Likert scale items arranging from strongly agree, agree, indifferent, disagree and strongly disagree. Percentages were used to analyze the data. The findings lead to conclude that mobile learning has a great potential for the DDE for reaching out to the rural, remotely located distance learners of the Jammu region and also to improve the teaching-learning environment. The paper also finds out the challenges in the implementation of mobile learning in the region and further makes suggestions for effective implementation of mobile learning in DDE, University of Jammu.

Keywords : directorate of distance education, mobile learning, national accreditation and assessment council, university of Jammu

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