

Students' Opinions Related to Virtual Classrooms within the Online Distance Education Graduate Program

Authors : Secil Kaya Gulen

Abstract : Face to face and virtual classrooms that came up with different conditions and environments, but similar purposes have different characteristics. Although virtual classrooms have some similar facilities with face-to-face classes such as program, students, and administrators, they have no walls and corridors. Therefore, students can attend the courses from a distance and can control their own learning spaces. Virtual classrooms defined as simultaneous online environments where students in different places come together at the same time with the guidance of a teacher. Distance education and virtual classes require different intellectual and managerial skills and models. Therefore, for effective use of virtual classrooms, the virtual property should be taken into consideration. One of the most important factors that affect the spread and effective use of the virtual classrooms is the perceptions and opinions of students -as one the main participants-. Student opinions and recommendations are important in terms of providing information about the fulfillment of expectation. This will help to improve the applications and contribute to the more efficient implementations. In this context, ideas and perceptions of the students related to the virtual classrooms, in general, were determined in this study. Advantages and disadvantages of virtual classrooms expected contributions to the educational system and expected characteristics of virtual classrooms have examined in this study. Students of an online distance education graduate program in which all the courses offered by virtual classrooms have asked for their opinions. Online Distance Education Graduate Program has totally 19 students. The questionnaire that consists of open-ended and multiple choice questions sent to these 19 students and finally 12 of them answered the questionnaire. Analysis of the data presented as frequencies and percentages for each item. SPSS for multiple-choice questions and Nvivo for open-ended questions were used for analyses. According to the results obtained by the analysis, participants stated that they did not get any training on virtual classes before the courses; but they emphasize that newly enrolled students should be educated about the virtual classrooms. In addition, all participants mentioned that virtual classroom contribute their personal development and they want to improve their skills by gaining more experience. The participants, who mainly emphasize the advantages of virtual classrooms, express that the dissemination of virtual classrooms will contribute to the Turkish Education System. Within the advantages of virtual classrooms, 'recordable and repeatable lessons' and 'eliminating the access and transportation costs' are most common advantages according to the participants. On the other hand, they mentioned 'technological features and keyboard usage skills affect the attendance' is the most common disadvantage. Participants' most obvious problem during virtual lectures is 'lack of technical support'. Finally 'easy to use', 'support possibilities', 'communication level' and 'flexibility' come to the forefront in the scope of expected features of virtual classrooms. Last of all, students' opinions about the virtual classrooms seems to be generally positive. Designing and managing virtual classrooms according to the prioritized features will increase the students' satisfaction and will contribute to improve applications that are more effective.

Keywords : distance education, virtual classrooms, higher education, e-learning

Conference Title : ICEDL 2018 : International Conference on Education and Distance Learning

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : July 23-24, 2018