

THE USE OF A WEB BASED “BLACKBOARD” AS A UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING TOOL FOR MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATES AT A SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

There is an increasing trend in the use of computer based learning tools in undergraduate and post graduate teaching/learning. This e- tool which is known as a “blackboard” is used worldwide in Universities as a teaching/ learning and as an e-communicative method. For example universities such as Harvard, Yale Cambridge, Oxford and Dundee use web blackboards as effective learning tools. However this web based blackboard learning is a new approach in Sri Lankan Universities.

The Blackboard Learning provides a virtual learning environment for students to engage in learning activities at their own pace and in their own environment. Sri Lankan students are not much used to computers and e-learning culture. However it is worth evaluating how they perceive this new tool - web based “black Board” as a teaching and a learning method. Therefore the aim of this study was to evaluate students’ perceptions (4th medical students at University of Peradeniya) on this new tool.

Materials and Methods

A web based blackboard environment was created within the Department of

Forensic Medicine web page. A group of 31, 4th year medical students from University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka were selected and introduced the blackboard concept. Then the students were allowed to navigate and use the “blackboard” of the forensic Medicine department independently. Then a questionnaire was distributed and their responses concerning this learning tool was collected and analysed.

Results and Discussion

100 % of students stated that they heard about this kind of a tool for the first time. They all (100%) agreed that this tool is a very effective method of teaching and learning. 97% agreed that this tool can be used to teach content knowledge while over 90% agreed that this tool can be also used to improve skills and attitudes. 100% of students agreed that this tool is interesting and student friendly while majority (96%) agreed that it helps deeper learning and instills interest in the subject.

Conclusion

According to the perception received, Blackboard is an effective tool to be used in teaching and learning and course management in local universities.