PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SUBJECT: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AMPARA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has turned out to be an essential cause of invention as well as the expansion of efficacy for various segments all over the globe. The implementation of ICT has become an interpretative portion of the education progression for school children both in outside and inside the classroom. As a result, the Sri Lankan government incorporated ICT into the school education in 2006 and has launched a new stream for GCE Advanced Level (A/L) called a Technology course in 2015. Therefore, this study was performed using a stratified random sampling technique by chosen samples from the respective stratum of 5 corresponding high schools in the Ampara district. A total of 300 questionnaires were issued among the students by written survey and email survey and out of these, 200 usable questionnaires were returned. Thus, the sample size was 200. This study was carried out to analyze the students' awareness in the ICT subject, the influence of computer facilities on students' choice of the subject, the influence of factors and parents' influence in the selection of the subject. Descriptive test statistics were also applied, and the necessary statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software. Further, 5% of the significant level was used in this study. The majority of respondents were males (56.5%), between 18-20 years old, and they had very negative perceptions and attitudes about the subject. Also, they strongly agreed that individual interest (42%) and career perusal (34.5%) were the main reasons to select the subject. 60.5% of students said the ICT subject prepared them to a great extent for their future career. 57% of them revealed that they had no computer laboratories and the equipment for teaching ICT (59%) was not adequate. Most of them had internet facilities in their schools (60%) which had influenced them tremendously to select the ICT subject (33.5%). Phone usage, technology adoption, computer laboratories, and availability of desktops and modems had significant influence on their subject selection. Teachers and parents had given guidance for their subject selection, but the principals had poor influence in relation to providing valuable guidance. They agreed that subject selection criteria orientations were very helpful in the selection of the subject (53.5%). The parents' or guardians' attitudes towards the ICT subject were positive (36%). Furthermore, the parents' or guardians' education level and their financial status were significantly related to the ICT subject selection. Therefore, this study recommends that the school principals should contribute their valuable support and guidance for their schoolchildren's subject selection criteria.

Moreover, they should find ways to acquire computer laboratory and equipment for their schools. Also, the government should consider providing computer laboratory facilities and internet connectivity for all high-level schools. Indeed, it is recommended and necessary that school principals and teachers should arrange ICT subject awareness programs for students and parents/guardians for the betterment of society.

Keywords: Ampara District, High School, ICT, Influence, Parents, Students

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