

WORLD WIDE WEB: :ITS PERCEPTION AND USAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG MANAGEMENT FACULTY

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1. Introduction: No one can dispute that we live in a digital environment and the complexity of digital world has been simplified by the World Wide Web. World Wide Web technology has created new opportunities for learners and has created a bridge between complexity and simplicity. Businesspeople and educators have expended many efforts to test different applications and build demand for their educational offerings. Web learning sites have proliferated. The audiences and instructional methodologies for the different Web learning efforts vary. Some are for children, some are for adults. Some offer academic courses that parallel on-site classroom instruction, while others offer professional development programs that a teacher or other professional might otherwise present in a workshop or training program. Some offer traditional didactic instruction, while others attempt, through varying amounts of assistance, to orchestrate more open-ended, constructivist experiences for the user. Some are rigid in the way they channel the learner through a sequence of interactions. Others let users direct their own learning by choosing where they want to go and what they want to do. Web-based professional training yields additional benefits, like Access is available anytime, anywhere, around the globe; per-student equipment costs are affordable. Student tracking is made easy, Content is easily updated. Applications of Web-based technology for professional development include: Digital libraries that permit the retrieval of standards, lesson plans, assessments, evaluation resources, full texts of articles, artifacts such as student work, and other resource materials, in any medium. Multimedia learning technologies for training purposes that present information, assess learning, provide feedback, and individualize the learning path. Tools and environments for synchronous and asynchronous professional communication and collaboration (e.g., e-mail, whiteboards, chats, video-conferences, file-sharing systems, etc.) Professionally useful databases that permit members of professional communities to post, meta tag, query, mine, and link records of interest. Annotation interfaces layered over digital library resources that make it possible for members of professional communities to exchange context-embedded reflections and feedback about them.

1.1. Why Web Based professional development? Web is an area which gives us bulk of information on just a click. In order to better understand the benefits and thereby increase the adoption of web, it is essential to emphasize the need of World Wide Web for professional development. While understanding the cost benefit analysis of using web, the benefits derived by the web become the main consideration over and above its cost effectiveness. The benefits can not be measured in terms of cost but time which is very crucial today is reduced a lot in searching of particular information. The huge pool of information whether it be research papers, articles or just any book it is available at our convenient time and our convenient place. It is on our knowledge how we use it for our development.

1.2 Professional development: refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees to formal coursework, conferences and informal learning opportunities situated in practice. It has been described as intensive and collaborative, ideally incorporating an evaluative stage. There are a variety of approaches to professional development, including consultation, coaching, communities of practice, lesson study, mentoring, reflective supervision and technical assistance.

2. Literature Review: Interest in the field of world wide web is of recent origin with some earliest studies on world wide web dating back to the late 1990's. A review of the existing literature shows that there are a number of researches being conducted on world wide web on the international front. In any society the imparters of education have higher moral responsibility to positively influence the student generation. Educators are beginning to realize that to teach future leaders and citizens they need to be technologically better equipped themselves. so they should be professionally well developed. The complexity can be eased with the help of world wide web which provides up to date information on any topic of choice but they should have the analyzing capacity to filter it out. Some ongoing research areas include web based professional development for the school teachers (normal and high risk students), for homeless and mobile students, attitudes of teachers towards development and self efficacy etc.

Another focus area of research has been the advances of web based approaches.

Hence there is a necessity to identify factors that are deterring full and maximum utilization of web for professional development. A proper understanding of the underlying attitudes and perception is required so that steps can be taken to increase the user acceptance and usage of World Wide Web so that their growth can be propelled in a proper direction. The current research tries to bridge the gap by providing an understanding of the perception and usage of World Wide Web among a section of society. And thus the title goes "web based professional development a bridge between complexity and simplicity".

3. Objectives

- 1) To find whether web based development is a bridge between complexity to simplicity.
- 2) The present study has been conducted with a view to find out the usage patterns of World Wide Web for professional development.
- 3) To find out the perception of faculty.

4. Methodology of Research: The present study has been conducted for 35 faculty members who were selected using purposive and convenience sampling. The data was collected through personal survey method. A structured questionnaire was prepared for the respondents. In order to develop the questionnaire and identify the various factors and variables to be studied, the literature on World Wide Web was referred.

5. Research Findings and Analysis

5.1 Usage pattern of World Wide Web among faculty members

In order to find out usage pattern of World Wide Web among faculty members the respondents were asked to give their responses specifying their usage in terms of

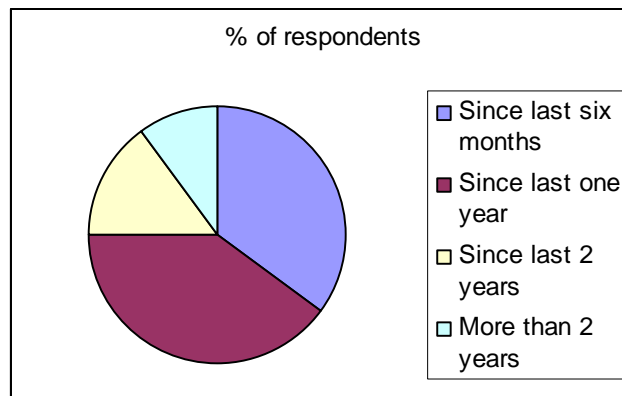
- a) Time period of using World Wide Web.
- b) Frequency of use of World Wide Web.
- c) Current level of knowledge regarding working with a world wide web.
- d) The level of comfort in using a world wide web
- e) Level of assistance required in using World Wide Web
- f) Common uses of World Wide Web.

On the basis of the data thus collected, the findings related to usage patterns of World Wide Web for professional development among faculty members are given in table 1-6

5.1.1 Time period of using World Wide Web.

Table 1 gives a break up of the respondents in terms of the time period of using World Wide Web for professional development

Table 1: time period of using world wide web	
Responses	% of respondents
Since last six months	35
Since last one year	40
Since last 2 years	15
More than 2 years	10

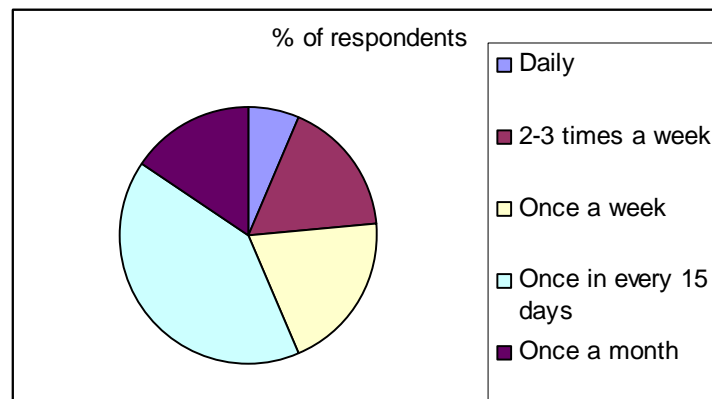


As can be seen the maximum number of respondents have been using world wide web only since the last one year (75%). This is quite understandable as the growth of world wide web for professional development is of recent origin and of late there is growing awareness of the benefits that can be availed from the use of world wide web in areas like research, conceptual enhancement and knowledge about upcoming trends.

5.1.2 Frequency of use of World Wide Web.

Table 2 gives a break up of the respondents in terms of the frequency of using World Wide Web for professional development

Table 1: Frequency of using world wide web	
Responses	% of respondents
Daily	6.4
2-3 times a week	17.3
Once a week	20.0
Once in every 15 days	40.7
Once a month	15.6



The findings of the study show that the use of world wide web for professional development is not very regular or frequent with only 6.4% of the respondents using it daily. Majority of the respondents use World Wide Web for professional development once in 15 days. This seems quite acceptable as knowing about latest trends, concepts and research does not require logging on to the web on a daily basis.

5.1.3 Current level of Knowledge regarding use of World Wide Web.

Table 3: Current level of Knowledge regarding use of world wide web.	
Responses	% of respondents
Very High	9.7
High	30.2
Low	49.7

Very Low	10.4
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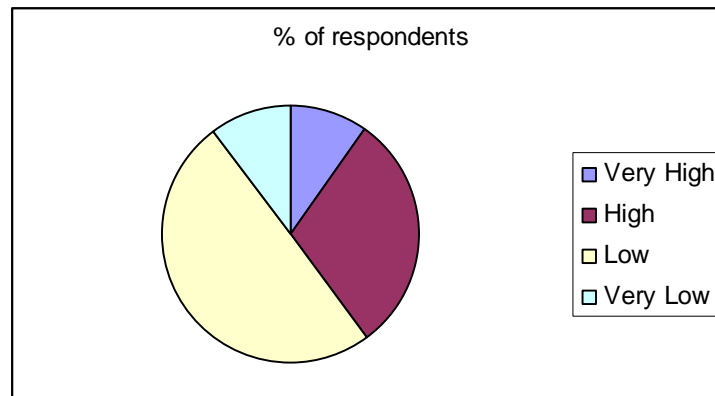
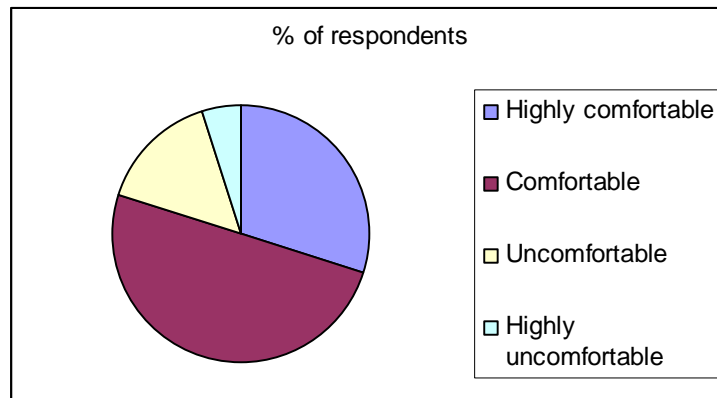


Table 3 gives the findings related to the Current level of Knowledge regarding use of World Wide Web. A majority of the respondent's current level of knowledge regarding working with web is low. The % of respondents with high and very high level of knowledge is 30.2% and 9.7% respectively. The above findings clearly depict the current state of knowledge regarding World Wide Web for professional development. Though computer literacy has dramatically increased over past few years the level of knowledge with respect to the utility of available information and optimally extracting the same from the internet has to reach a decent stage specially for professional development not only surfing.

5.1.4 Comfort level of using World Wide Web.

Table 4: Comfort level of using world wide web.	
Responses	% of respondents
Highly comfortable	30
Comfortable	50
Uncomfortable	15
Highly uncomfortable	05



A majority of the respondents are comfortable not highly comfortable with use of World Wide Web for professional development. The current findings support that because of lack of knowledge of World Wide Web use the comfort level is also average not excellent.

5.1.5 Level of assistance required to analyze the information from World Wide Web.

Table 5: level of assistance regarding to analyze information from world wide web.	
Responses	% of respondents
Very High	15.7
High	44.4
Low	28.8
Very Low	11.1

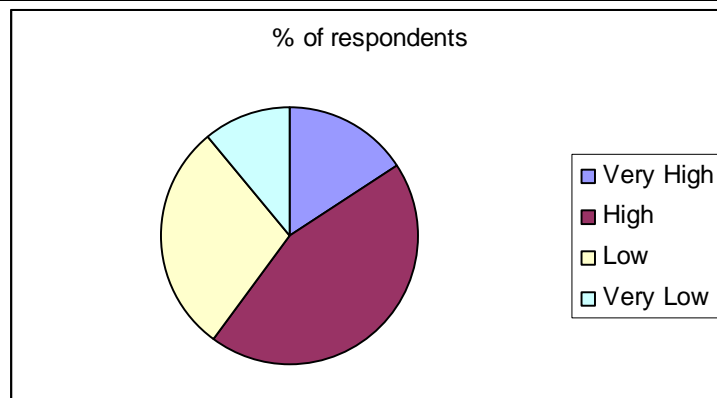


Table 5 gives the findings of the study pertaining to the Level of assistance required to analyze the information from World Wide Web. About 60.1% of the respondents require either high or very high level of assistance to analyze information from World Wide Web. About 40% respondents find very less assistance for analyzing information from the pool of information. This can be attributed to the fact that the use of World Wide Web for professional development is still in the nascent stage and in order to

switch over from traditional system to the digitized system people would require assistance to adapt to the changes taking place.

5.1.6. Areas of Usage of World Wide Web among faculty members

In order to find out the common areas of usage of World Wide Web by the faculty members the respondents were asked to rank a list of usage areas from 1-7 where 1 represents the highest ranks and 7 the lowest. Table 7 lists the average rank for each variable. Low ranks correspond to low values of the variable signifying their low priority in the list. As can be seen from the table the use of world wide web for research work is the most common area of usage of world wide web among the faculty members since gathering of information for research has the highest mean rank of 6.11 followed by the use of world wide web to find out advances in research and areas in research. The next area of usage is to find out latest trends. Gathering material for teaching is quite low on the list with a mean of 3.24, and the last is the use of World Wide Web for the allocation of project topics and for handling the assignments. Table 6 gives the result of the friedman test .As seen from the table the results are significant at 5% level of significance since the calculated value is less than the tabular value.

Table 6:Test Statistics		
N	Chi Square	df
35	1.99	6

Table 7: Areas of Usage of world wide web.	
Areas of usage of www by faculty members	Mean rank
To Gather information material for research	6.11
To find out advances in research	5.23
To find out research areas	4.79
To find out the latest trends/concepts in your area	4.67
To keep up to date with cross functional/diverse areas	4.57
To gather material for teaching	3.24
To allocate project topics/assignments	2.48

5.2 Perception of Faculty Members

This section deals with the perception of faculty members with respect to Factors leading to greater acceptability of World Wide Web.

- Advantages of world wide web
- Basic issues/challenges facing world wide web

5.2.1 Factors leading to greater acceptability of World Wide Web. In order to find out the perception of respondents regarding the factors leading to greater

acceptability of World Wide Web, the respondents were provided with a list of factors short listed in the preliminary exploration stage. The respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of the factors on a 4 point scale. The responses were analyzed by friedman test. Table 8 gives the results of test. As can be seen from the table the results are significant at 5 % level of significance since the asymptotic significance has come out to be less than tabular value.

Table 8:Test Statistics		
N	Chi Square	df
35	6.30	4

Table 9 gives the average rank for each variable .low ranks correspond to low values of the variable. as can be seen easy accessibility to internet is perceived to be the most important factor leading to acceptability of world wide web for professional development with the highest rank of 2.86 followed by the other factors. This is quite understandable as with better infrastructure and bandwidth and ever lowering cost of computer equipments, accessibility to internet has become relatively easy and less expensive.

Table 9: factors leading to greater accessibility of world wide web.	
factors leading to greater accessibility of world Wide web.	Mean rank
Easy Accessibility to internet	2.86
Increasing availability of download software	2.65
Declining cost of digital storage	2.51
Increased awareness	1.98
Increased access to computers	1.95

5.2.2 Advantages of World Wide Web :In order to find out the perception of respondents regarding the advantages offered by world wide web (over traditional approaches) which provide an impetus for the increased growth and popularity of world wide web, the respondents were provided with a list of the advantaged associated with world wide web. The respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of the options on a 4 point scale The responses were analyzed by friedman test. Table 8 gives the results of test. As can be seen from the table the results are significant at 5 % level of significance since the asymptotic significance has come out to be less than tabular value.

Table 10:Test Statistics		
N	Chi Square	df
35	10.20	11

Table 9 lists the average rank for each variable. Low ranks correspond to low values of variable. Though there is not much difference in the mean ranks of the top advantages associated with the World Wide Web, minor differences do exist. As can be seen from the responses the topmost advantage associated with World Wide Web as perceived by the respondents is round the clock

availability. In this endeavor there is a thirst among people to have everything on one's table at the click of a button. People no longer want to go to the places to access resources rather they prefer everything on 24/7 availability. In fact they want to carry every possible piece of information with its concurrency with no physical boundary coming in between.

Table 11 Advantages of world wide web.	
Advantages of world wide web.	Mean rank
Round the clock availability	4.99
Easier information retrieval	4.95
Easier to keep information current	4.81
Structured approach of storage of articles/papers	4.62
No physical boundary	4.57
No tampering and wear and tear	4.43
Preservation and conservation of rare information	4.04
Possible collaboration and exchange of ideas	3.60
Networking-seamlessly integrated resource sharing	3.53
Multiple accesses(i.e. access by more than 1 user at the same time)	3.23
Unlimited data	2.34
Saves money as traditional resources is more expensive	2.18

5.2.3 Basic Issues/Challenges facing world wide web In order to find out the perception of respondents regarding the basic issues/challenges facing world wide web which pose or might pose a threat for the growth and popularity of world wide web, the respondents were asked to rate the level of importance of the options on a 4 point scale. The responses were analyzed by friedman test. Table 12 gives the results of test. As can be seen from the table the results are significant at 5 % level of significance since the asymptotic significance has come out to be less than tabular value.

Table 12:Test Statistics		
N	Chi Square	df
35	14.20	10

Table 13 lists the average rank for each variable .The faculty members perceive readability of the material (researches, articles) made available on World Wide Web to be the most important challenge facing World Wide Web with a mean rank of 6.92.Though quite low on the list is technical obsolescence. Moreover a major chunk of society has still not been able to come to terms and accept re conceptualized model of web. Though there has been a marked improvement in the infrastructure of internet the respondents still perceive it to be major issue /challenge to sustain the growth of infrastructure to cater to the increasingly net savvy population.

Table 13 Basic issues/challenges of world wide web.	
Basic issues/challenges of world wide web.	Mean rank
Readability	6.92
Availability of internet infrastructure	6.79
Acceptability	6.42
Network Bandwidth	6.38
Security of data	6.31
Maximizing utility of existing information	5.93
Rights Management	5.90
Cost of Updating/constant refreshing	5.68
Technical obsolescence	5.55
Interoperability	4.49

6. Conclusion : Web-based Professional Development (WBPD) focuses on improving educational outcomes for Students and professionals experiencing homelessness and high mobility. The general benefits of Web-based professional development when compared to traditional instructor-led training include all those shared by other types of technology-based training. These benefits are that the training is usually self-paced, highly interactive, results in increased retention rates, and has reduced costs associated with student travel to an instructor-led workshop. The world today is increasingly becoming a digitized one. The Digitization can be seen in all that we do. One major set of users of World Wide Web are the academicians which include teachers, students and researchers, in diverse fields. In order to give an impetus to the growth of World Wide Web in India and to increase its popularity and acceptability among academicians, one needs to have a clear understanding of the usage patterns and perception of people with respect to world wide web. The present study has been undertaken with a view to gain an insight into the patterns of use and the perception of the faculty members regarding World Wide Web for professional development.

- i) The findings related to usage patterns of World Wide Web show that not many of the respondents have been using World Wide Web for a longer period of time. This could be because the adoption of World Wide Web for professional development by the institute has been done recently.
- ii) Findings related to the regularity and frequency of use of world wide web is not very high but is generally once a week or once in every 15 days. This could be because the most common use of web is not in teaching but in research as deduced from the findings.
- iii) Looking at the percentage figures it can be seen that the percentage of respondents who seem to feel more confident in their current level to those who require less assistance in using World Wide Web is almost the same. Based on these findings it can be deduced that greater the level of knowledge people possess in using world wide web the more comfortable they feel in using it and thus lesser the level of assistance they require for the same.
- iv) The findings related to perception of faculty members in respect to the factors leading to greater accessibility of World Wide Web, advantages of World Wide Web and basic issues/challenges facing World Wide Web give an insight into the overall perception of faculty towards World Wide Web. As can be seen from the findings the greatest advantage associate with World Wide Web is round the clock

availability and easier retrieval of current information. Taking a cue from the perception of respondents World Wide Web can be promoted by stressing and showcasing their advantages.

- v) Since readability is perceived to be the most important challenge facing world wide web the owners of the information need to pay special attention to overcoming this barrier either by improving the readability of the papers/articles accessible through the world wide web or by trying to break down the psychological barrier which people have in preferring to read the hard copy rather than soft copy.

The findings of the study will thus be of help to academicians who would be interested in their professional development because the advantages of World Wide Web for making complex task easy by providing a pool of relevant information. The sample for this research was based on convenience and cannot be projected to the entire state, country. The fact that there is a variation in the perceptions of people due to socio-economic and cultural differences cannot be denied. Thus the study could be extended to other parts of the country so that the findings may be more useful.

7. References

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