

Exploring agriculture undergraduate students' learning preference for self-directed learning

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Self-directed learning (SDL) is a fundamental educational goal based on lifelong learning. Therefore, poor academic performance among undergraduates is due to restrictions for adopting SDL. Thus it is worthwhile to explore the SDL of Agriculture undergraduates in University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the preference of undergraduates of Faculty of Agriculture for SDL.

The methodology was mainly quantitative. Questionnaire with closed ended questions was used as the research instrument. However, some open-ended questions were also included in the questionnaire in order to get little in depth information. Sample of 146 Students who have immediately completed the undergraduate degree program in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya were selected using simple random sampling. The questionnaires were posted and students were requested to return the completed questionnaire. Ninety-eight completed questionnaires were returned within the period of two months. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Chi square test of independence was performed to identify significant relationships.

The response rate was 67.12%. Results revealed that, the highest percentage (61.2%) preferred if the lecture is incorporated with SDL activities, followed by second highest percentage of 36.7% preferred to study their own way with the guidance of the lecturer. However, some students (2.0%) preferred other methods such as getting information 'through internet' and 'e-learning'. But none of the students preferred to listen to lectures only. Meanwhile, the highest percentage, 77.6% was familiar with the term 'self-directed learning' whereas 9.2% were not and 13.3% did not have an idea of it. There is a moderately strong significant relationship between the familiarity of the term SDL and the preferred way of learning ($p=0.014$). Students stated that less SDL activities incorporated with lecturers and with tight work schedule in the faculty they do not have time to study their own way.

The study implies the motivation of undergraduates towards SDL. However there were some issues such as less SDL activities incorporated with teaching process. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate more SDL activities with the teaching process. Instead, improving familiarity towards SDL among undergraduate students and allocating more time for their own learning would augment SDL in undergraduate students.