



Building IT Skills in Sri Lanka: Learning by Doing

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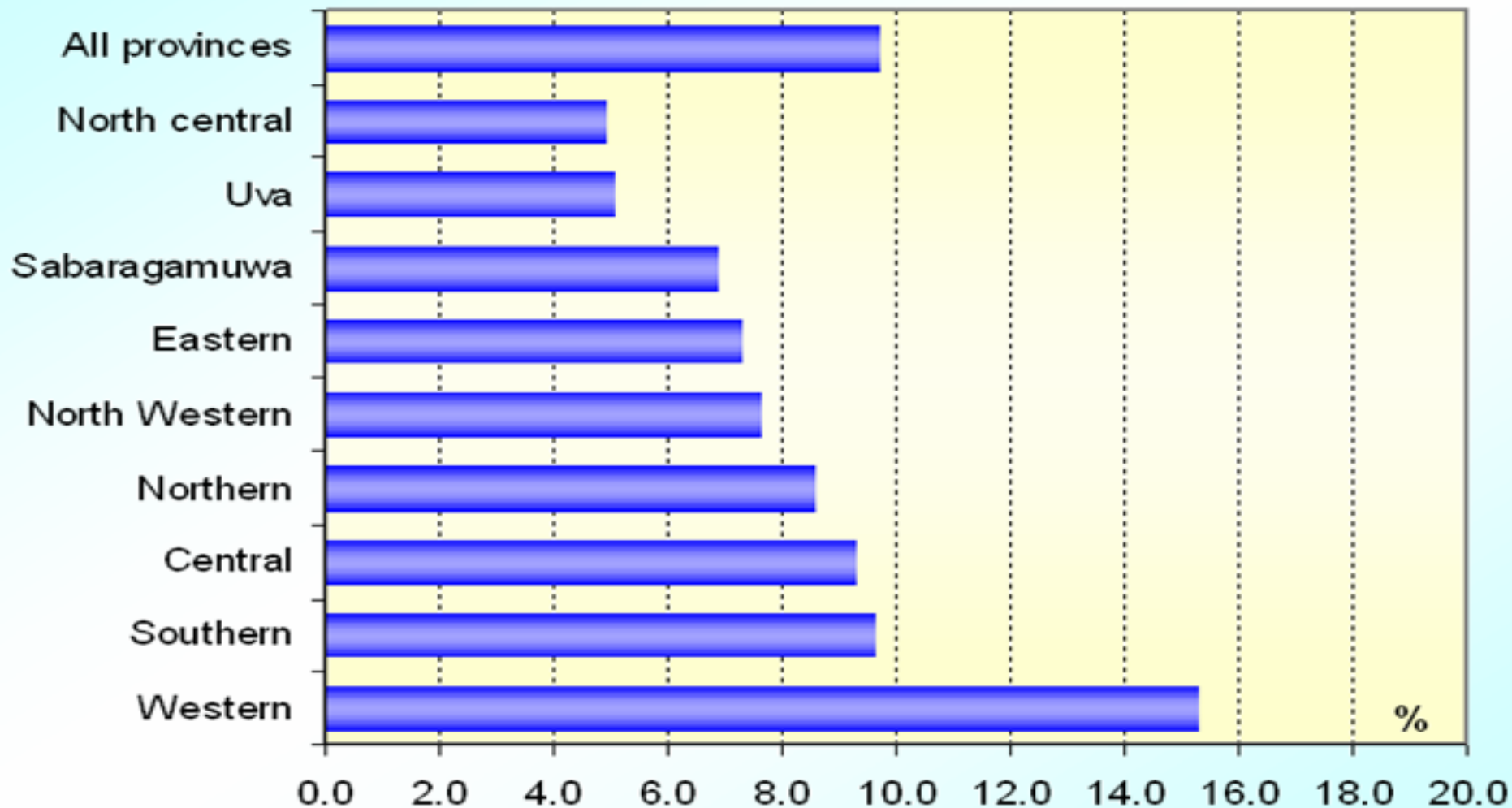


Background

- § Emergence of e- learning became an urgent issue in the late 90's and early 2000's.
- § Literacy rate is 92%, 83% of population have completed secondary education
- § 10% are computer literate
- § Asymmetrical nature of the geographical distribution of IT literacy indicates payoffs from distance education.



Computer literacy of household population (5 - 69 years) by province



The PDPA Program

- § New 18-month Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration offered by the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM) affiliated to the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in Colombo.
- § Was developed to train 150 newly recruited graduates in the Ministry of Finance & Planning who are expected to perform various executive level functions within the Government.

Blended Learning

- § Web uploaded textual material
- § Interactive CD's
- § Group learning sessions
- § Web forum
- § E-journal



Plan of Study

- § The program has just begun, so we can follow it from conception
- § Is 18-months in duration, so we can understand the role of time
- § Offers a unique blended context, so we can experiment with which aspects of the program are best suited to technology delivery and which to face-to-face delivery
- § Has Ministry support, so we can modify both course as well as context



Preliminary Findings

§ Out of the 150 programme participants, 122 completed our initial survey (for a response rate of 81.3%).

Table 1: Demographics (n=122)

<i>Age (in years)</i>	Mean = 35.8	SD = 3.84
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Sinhalese = 118	Other = 4
<i>Gender</i>	Male = 41	Female = 81
<i>Education level</i>	Bachelor's Degree = 106 Master's Degree = 12 Other = 4	

Quantitative Findings

- § Age is negatively related to course outcomes
- § Internet availability is positively related to course outcomes
- § Personality dimension, openness to experience, is negatively related to course outcomes



Qualitative Findings

- § Group leaders expressed (on the part of themselves and their teammates) considerable concern over a lack of internet availability
- § Inadequacy of the official leave provided
- § Restrictions to internet access at office
- § Concerns raised about the English language as the medium of instruction
- § Overall appreciation of the program
 - Opportunity for knowledge and skill enhancement
 - Increase of motivation



The Way Forward

- § We would be very interested in getting feedback from participants focused on:
- Over-coming barriers (IT, language, effort)
 - Working within existing constraints of a national information infrastructure that is less developed
 - While we have some limited data about individual characteristics that may make for better or worse on-line students, we would be interested in learning what others may have found in this area too.



Questions ?



Thank You !