

Usage of Facebook in Education

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Abstract

The conventional set up of four walls with three dimensional teaching aids or smart classrooms are shaking under the regime of Social Networking Sites (SNS) where students are making connections with the unexplored outer world. The educational relevance of the Facebook in contemporary educational system is demanding our immediate attention. The undeterred task ahead for teachers, students, policy makers and administrators is to take this challenge on priority basis without ignoring the time gap that education and technology will contour for the education of future generations. The present paper explores the possibilities of usage of Facebook in education for teachers via case studies. The positive results of the cases discussed here in the paper are encouraging and motivating.

The usage of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has become an indispensable thing in the life of youngsters. Now-a-days students are very much familiar with Web 2.0 technologies like Social Network Sites, blogs, Wikis, Twitter, podcasts, virtual worlds, Snap chat, video and photo sharing on Instagram, etc.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

Boyd and Ellison (2007) describes Social Networking Sites (SNS) as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users within whom they share a connection,

and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within this system. Hitwise, an Experian Company (2007) explains Social networking websites are online communities of people who share interests and activities of others. They typically provide a variety of ways

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for users to interact, through chat, messaging, email. Twitter, Facebook, Friendster, MySpace, Cyworld, Bebo, Orkut, Skype, SnapChat and many others are some examples of Social Networking Sites (SNS).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. On the positive side of Social Networking Sites

Works done by Yang (2003); Silverman (2007); Kord (2008); Helou and Rahim (2010) and Swang (2011) revealed that the college students are frequent users of online social networking sites, however they use the sites more often for general purposes rather than for the academic reasons. Lavleen Kaur (2012), in her study on relationship between Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage and social skills of the pupil teachers, concluded that there exists significant relationship between Social Networking Sites (SNS) and social skills of the pupil teachers.

Walz (2009) suggested the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) which may benefit college students by increasing their sense of belonging and hence increase their proficiency in offline social and communicative behaviours.

Crook and Harrison (2008) stated that little empirical research has been conducted on the value of Web 2.0 in education. However, few of them have specifically addressed its role in pedagogy (Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis, 2007; Mathews, 2006; Mazer et al., 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Towner and VanHorn, 2007).

2. On the negative side of Social Networking Sites

Raccanello's (2011) study concluded that online social networking texts are superficial and embellished but also representative of identities which are far away from real identities. Rosen (2011) on the basis of the findings of the studies discussed the potential adverse effects of Social Networking Sites (SNS) as under:

- Negative tendencies, anxiety and depression.
- Health issues.
- Distraction.

FACEBOOK AS A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE

Facebook is perhaps the largest online Social Networking Sites (SNS) for students and the general public. It was created by Mark Zuckerberg of Harvard University in 2004. The site was originally developed for college and university students as a way to connect with one another. Facebook was opened to public in 2006. The number of technological features makes Facebook more user friendly and providing opportunities to share more things frequently.

FACEBOOK AND EDUCATION

Some Empirical Evidences

- A study by Baylor University (2014) claimed that although some teachers may worry that social media distracts students from legitimate learning, we found that our Facebook group

helped transform students from anonymous spectators into a community of active learners—and this has important consequences for student performance. The research focussed on a class of 218 students in an introductory sociology class. The study found that students, who participated in the Facebook group scored higher on quizzes, wrote stronger papers and performed better in exams than classmates who did not take part. (The Economic Times, 2014).

- A survey conducted by the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) between July to December 2013 reported that 76% of teenagers spread across 14 Indian cities had a Facebook account in 2014, though the figure was 86% in 2012. It said 87% of the high school students think social media has made them aware of current affairs (Daily Life, 2014).

NEED OF THE STUDY

The present paper tries to find out whether Facebook can be used as a tool in education.

- The investigator being in-charge of the college Placement Cell wanted a portal where latest job openings and opportunities in the higher education can be shared with students for their benefit.
- The students hardly visited the college website (www.gcechd.nic.in) for information and latest updates of the institution.
- Most of the students remain

in touch with their peer group through Facebook or what's App.

THEMES OF THE CASES

The selected theme of the following cases deals with the usage of Facebook in education:-

CASE I: FOR PLACEMENT CELL SERVICES

Time Period: 2012-13 and 2013-14

Target Group: M.Ed. and B.Ed. students of the above said session of Government College of Education, Chandigarh were considered.

Objective: Opening Facebook account and Group Formation for Placement Cell Services.

Initial Phase: Opening personal Facebook account.

In February 2013, a personal Facebook account was created by the investigator. All the aspects concerned with Facebook like Setting, Privacy, Sharing of various Posts, Pictures etc were studied thoroughly till June 2013. The investigator found Facebook, a more accessible tool for providing information related with opportunities in jobs and higher education to the students as compared to other traditional modes like telephoning or putting the information on Notice Boards/ Bulletin Boards etc.

Middle Phase: Personal CLOSE Group Formation.

A CLOSE GROUP was formed under the name of Moving ahead with

Purpose (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/movingcandy>). Ex students of session 2012-13 joined this group for the information updates about the opportunities available in jobs and higher education in India. The investigator acted as ADMIN of the group whereas the students who joined were MEMBERS of this group. They were clearly informed that anyone who violates this mandatory instruction is liable to lose the membership of the group. The students cooperated positively in this regard by posting only that information which was totally related to the OBJECTIVE of the GROUP FORMATION. Till date the group has 68 members where investigator is acting as an ADMIN.

Final Phase— Opening Facebook account and Group Formation for Placement Cell Services.

The successful formation of the Moving Ahead with Purpose Group and the positive feedback received from the ex students encouraged the investigator to initiate the whole process for the college Placement Cell Services also. The permission for initiating this project was taken from the Head of the Government College of Education, Chandigarh. The members of the assigned committee rigorously gone through the modalities and code of conduct that has to be followed while using Facebook for Placement Cell. Finally the official Facebook account Placement Cell Gcechd (<https://www.facebook.com/govcol.educhd>) and

a closed group PLACEMENT CELL, GCE CHD (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/placementgcechd20/>) were open for ex as well as students of the current session on 25 March, 2014.

Any student who wants to join the group is required to send the message regarding their official name, roll no., class and session to ADMIN for the confirmation which will be tallied from the official data base of the college Placement Cell. The members of this group can share or post their queries regarding JOB VACANCY or HIGHER EDUCATION opportunities available in the various educational institutions. The discussions over personal matters or postings are restricted. Malicious and controversial content posting is also strictly prohibited and will lead to the cancellation of membership from the group. At present there are 67 members and the In charge of the Placement Cell acts as an ADMIN in the group.

OUTCOMES

- Immediate dispensation of the information to all the members of the group.
- Quick disposal of the queries forwarded by the members.
- Various links concerned with employment and Universities are LINKED so that updates are available to members. For example: Government job India, Government Jobs updates, Employment News, Recruitment Govt. Jobs India etc.

CASE II: FACEBOOK AS A TOOL FOR TEACHING

Time Period: 2013-14

Target Group: Since the investigator was teaching the following disciplines to the B.Ed. students:

Philosophical and Sociological Basis of Education (Paper I)

- Teaching of Economics
- Distance Education and Open Learning

The students of the above said disciplines were considered for studying the usage of Facebook as a teaching tool. The students who had either internet connection in their Personal Computers or mobile phones opted to join the specified Facebook group.

Objective: Using Facebook group as a tool for teaching.

Instructions to the Students: The objectives to join the group were made clear by the investigator to all the students along with the following instructions:-

- It is not mandatory to all the students to join the group. They had full discretion over their choice to join the group or not.
- Any student who does not want to use his/her personal Facebook account to join the group, can create another Facebook account so that he/she feel safe in terms of privacy and security.
- Students have to message their Roll No to join the group.
- Bullying in the form of COMMENTS,

POKES is not allowed and will lead to cancellation of the membership from the group.

- Teaching content in the forms of LINKS, UPLOADS, POWER POINT presentations can be posted by the students.
- The privacy of the student will be maintained in terms of messages sent by them to ADMIN.

Outcomes: The name of the group that was formed is RAINBOW (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rainbowsaga>) and till date it has 73 members.

- Teaching content in the forms of LINKS, UPLOADS, POWER POINT presentations were shared with students.
- Students put forward their queries related with the teaching content which were followed by the feedback from ADMIN.
- Language was now not a barrier to communicate. Students are free to choose English/Hindi/Punjabi language.
- Students interacted and connected with each other and feeling of WE generated among members. It gave them a comfortable ZONE where students found that they are a part of the learning system. Since privacy of the group was CLOSED, it gave the students, a sense of security.
- Each member student got an opportunity to express his/her opinion/ideas/suggestions in the

teaching learning process which sometimes is not possible in the limited working hours of the time table.

- Over the course of the time, students (members) began to post links, pictures, queries and events they wanted to share.
- The students kept track on the outgoing activities of the classroom even when they inadvertently missed their classes.
- Facebook group acted as an efficient mode of interaction between ADMIN and students on a daily basis.
- The whole activity created a dynamic vitality in teaching methodology of the teacher.
- Facebook group allowed posting images, videos, podcast, links which are directly accessible to students. It also acted as a Bulletin Board and forum for discussions also.

Precautions Taken for Functioning of the Facebook Groups

- No sensitive information like awards or marks scored during internal examinations is to be posted or shared.
- One of the important things is the COMFORT ZONE which the teacher has to provide to the students. They must be given TRUST, FAITH and COURAGE to say the things. They must not be CONDEMNED and RIDICULED for their different opinions or

views. The teacher has to provide LOGIC and RATIONAL ATTITUDE towards their opinion even if he/she disapproves certain things.

- All the activities done on Facebook must be in professional terms and to be used only for teaching related activities.
- FRIEND'S REQUEST and FOLLOW links must be disabled in the privacy settings. COMMENTS, LIKES, SHARE all these should be disabled for general public to avoid unnecessary things which may derail the whole purpose of forming Facebook group for teaching related activities.

Limitations of the Case Studies

- Qualitative methods like case studies and observations were used to analyse the outcomes.
- The cases discussed in the paper were practicable only at higher education level.
- M.Ed. and B.Ed. students of the selected institution (Government College of Education, Chandigarh) were considered.

Educational Implications

- There are number of applications and groups available on Facebook like Courses, Cite Me, Book Tag, Acceptly FBap, Calendar, Knighthood, Mathematical Formula, Used Textbooks group, Webinairia, JSTOR Search, Homework Hep, Word of the Day, Zoho Online Office, Notely, Language Exchange, Typing

Test, Quiz Monster, Notecentric, Slideshare, WorldCat, Hey Math ! Challenge, Flashcardlet etc which a teacher can use for improving teaching-learning process.

- Facebook usage provides an opportunity for teachers to teach students how to be safe, polite and effective when using social media tools.
- Classroom activities and events can be managed and organised efficiently via Facebook calendar.
- Motivational content can be shared with students as it can boost their morale.
- Facebook can be used for CAREER GUIDANCE and COUNSELLING CELL.
- The Students can FOLLOW OR LIKE various pages which can provide updates and important information. For example:- Newspapers; publications by various agencies like WTO, World Economic Affair; Groups based on various issues/themes: Government job India, Government Jobs updates, Employment News, Recruitment Govt. Jobs India; Books; Movies; Museums; Motivational Quotes; Films; Songs; Games; Art Galleries; Public Figures; Celebrities; Politicians/Leaders at the local, state and international level.
- Students can get exposure to Facebook group discussions, Brain storming sessions, social media etiquette or skills.

- Improves command over language and communication skills.
- Facebook can be used for RESEARCH purposes as questionnaire or opinionnaires can be get filled easily by the respondents.
- Saves paper and environment.

Suggestions for Teachers

- Different courses or classes must have different GROUPS so that things remain focused to the ideology behind group formation.
- Refraining strategy to be adopted by teachers on unnecessary controversies.
- Make clear cut policies on social media. These must be prepared along with the help from fellow teachers, students, parents, Head of the institution and administrators. All the activities concerned with Facebook must adhere to Code of Conduct.
- Keep personal and professional boundaries space on Facebook separate. Personal information like pictures, videos etc must not be shared either by students or teachers. Teachers must avoid making students in FRIEND'S LIST.
- Never compromise with anyone's privacy. Name calling, sexting, threats, gossip, teasing, insults, rumours, lies, mean words etc must be avoided and students should be made aware about these issues.

- CYBER BULLYING must be dealt with serious consideration from the institution.
- Content filtering and strong malware protection must be there for the computers.
- Teachers must create awareness among students about the Time Management Skill when using Facebook.
- Workshop/ Seminar/ Lectures on IT Acts and CYBER LAWS must be conducted from time to time.

SUMMING UP

Technology gives the quietest student a voice.-----Jerry Blumengarten (2013)

These echoing lines not only sums up the present paper but also gave the insight to the investigator to initiate the work on these lines in

practical terms via usage of Facebook in education. The quietest student will certainly get a voice but teacher will also get an opportunity to touch the cores of the student's heart by removing more barriers of formal structure of education. The platform Social Networking Sites (SNS) are opening to the society will eventually transform social, cultural, political, economical and educational set up of all nations. The usage of social media in education is not a Pandora's box but a WINDOW where a teacher has to act as a guardian and guiding force for their students so that this window can be opened with courage to look at the sky (taming virtual opportunities to achieve the goal of all round development) without losing their firm stand on the ground (ignoring the virtual risks and threats).

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