

Using Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) in an ODL Teachers/Teaching Training and Practice during COVID-19

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Abstract

Globally, educational institutions, states and central universities were closed due to the corona pandemic. The search for new modes of teaching-learning and training began during the lockdown. In current society, Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) are powerful pedagogical resources; however, they require special teacher training. Using DSMNT to support educational endeavours leverages the benefits of in-person learning groups or communities, along with the benefits of using technology to support student system involvement. The research study begins with a reflection of the use of training teachers in the utilisation of DSMNT and the curriculum, or the pedagogical use of DSMNT. The research paper closes with a discussion of the benefits and challenges of DSMNT (Social Networking) based on the data obtained from questionnaires, observations and posts of students/others on the network. Despite the difficulties, the use of DSMNT was recognised as positive during COVID-19.

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INTRODUCTION

The major challenge in Indian higher educational institutions is to integrate the methods of teaching and pedagogy with technology—to strengthen the teaching method with digital technology instead of traditional teaching method in which face-to-face teaching is taught. ODL and digital social media technology has become a powerful medium of teaching and training activities during this pandemic. We cannot teach as we were trained during the 1980's, which is different as compared to the current student profile with most of them born during the 1990's.

Indeed, internet and mobile technology perceptions are raising questions regarding the mode of learning and teaching. This has challenged us to reinvent the concept of place, time, space, identity, immediacy, community and togetherness in a new way. These students are the Net Generation or the “digital natives”. These digital natives bring new challenges to the teaching and learning environment. Shortly after the millennium, digital social media with digital natives began to appear as a new way to mark a change in the way immigrants interacted with websites/mobiles. With the help of website technology, mobile technology changed all the disciplines of study, in which digital platforms of social media played an important role. “Social media is like a snowball rolling down the hill; it's picking up speed. A few years from

now, it is going to be the standard.” Over the past 10–15 years, “Web Technology 2.0” and “Web Technology 3.0” became famous features of websites, which allowed digital social media stakeholders to interact with each other as contributors to a website's content and information.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Social Media Technology in education refers to the practice of using social media platforms as a way to enhance the education of students and teaching. Digital Social Media Technology is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” (Kaplan, and Haenlein, (2010). COVID-19 has led to an expansion in the use of open distance learning and digital social media technology for educational communication purposes. The pandemic has also impacted ODL in higher education sector as the lockdown imposed in most countries resulted in the immediate closure of universities, colleges and schools, and the move to remote delivery of all academic activities (Sangster et al., 2020). With the lockdown situation around the global world, more than 72 per cent of the world's student's population were not attending schools/colleges/universities (UNESCO). During this time, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode was becoming more popular than the

conventional mode of education. ODL a very good platform to keep learners/educators engaged and safe by maintaining social distancing during the lockdown period for COVID-19. Open distance learning can take various forms and be supported by different systems and applications. It can be referred to as mobile learning, e-learning or blended learning (Ajayi et al., 2019). Faculty preference for traditional learning and inertia with regard to change were also included among a range of personal, social, technical, political, physical and economic infrastructure challenges the higher education institutions needed to face [cf.: Hashemi and Adu-Gyamfi, 2021; note that use of mobile applications and online tools, such as WhatsApp, increases immediacy and connection between students and teachers, while Ally and Prieto-Blazquez (2014) reported that with online tools, students can contact at any time regardless of the time differences, such as: WhatsApp, emails, Messenger, e-Learning platforms, virtual whiteboard, sharing platforms, audio and video communication tool (Google meet, MS Teams, Zoom)]. Telegram is a secure messaging app that became highly popular in the post-Snowden age. If you are a security-conscious user, this social messaging app can provide you with peace of mind. Pinterest is the most popular visual bookmarking and picture sharing social media site. This research paper explores the use of digital social media networking

technologies (DSMNT) to support education and student educators' participation in teaching practice in open distance learning or online learning.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of study are:

- (i) To understand the use of Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) in teaching and practice.
- (ii) To introduce the benefits of DSMNT in education sectors.
- (iii) To analyse the barriers faced by stakeholders in the use of Digital Social Media Networking Technologies.
- (iv) To give suggestions and strategies for Digital Social Media Networking Technologies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was exploratory by nature and, therefore, this research was mostly interpretive. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), interpretive research begins with individuals and how they understand and make sense of the world around them. The online survey was used to collect the data. The study aims to investigate the factors that impact digital social media technology in open and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of social media in this process. In this study, various data collection methods such as questionnaires,

interviews, group interviews and observations were used. The primary source of data was an online questionnaire conducted among the students participating in distance learning courses in education at the Open Universities or Institutions. As a source of the data, we used the results of a survey conducted between April, 2018 to July, 2021 among the D.El.Ed, B.Ed. and M.Ed. students and teachers, Management/Administration compulsorily participating in open and distance learning programs in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Delhi. The students represented a mix of different levels of graduation and post-graduation. Three hundred stakeholders took part in the survey. However, first 200 questionnaires for right answers/fill were found to be valid. Incomplete questionnaires were eliminated. Each states respondent was divided in four segments (B.Ed./D.El.Ed; M.Ed; Faculty and Management/Administration) for collecting primary data. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The data was entered in MS EXCEL. The information presented in the current study was collected from various authentic websites as it was risky to go out for data collection due to the pandemic. Some journals and e-content relating to educational system during COVID-19 were studied to find out the problems associated with the ODL system especially during pandemics.

Using Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) in Teaching and Practice

Scholars argued that digital social media and others are characterised as Web 2 based e-learning technology resources that emphasise participation, sharing of knowledge, active and uninterrupted connectivity, collaboration and ideas among stakeholders (Killeavy and Moloney, 2010; McLoughlin, 2007; Lee, 2007; and Van Wyk, 2013a). According to the authors and researchers, social media resources can be divided into three categories. The first category includes social networking sites or platform resources such as Twitter, Facebook, Ning, MySpace, Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram, which serve as online communities that allow stakeholders to connect with new or old friends and share information, enabling thoughts and sharing. The second social media category includes content creation and editing websites such as Google Docs, Wikipedia, Blogger and Word Press. The third category emphasises sharing content and organising sites. These digitalised social media can be very useful as e-learning tools which can serve an educational purpose, engagement during the teaching practice placements. Several authors and researchers have collaboratively defined social network sites or platforms as web-based services that allow an individual or group to (1) articulate a list of other users or stakeholders, with whom they share

a share connection, (2) form a public or semi-public view and view profiles within an impounded system and (3) on the other hand, the initial purpose of these platforms or sites was purely social as they provided a means to make new friends and connect with old friends (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; van Wyk, 2013 a). With the use of technology, the learning environment can be expanded (Cox, 2018). Teachers have used twitter to post assignments directly on the class account and students can practice commenting and liking the messages (Figueroa, 2021). College institutions are adapting many social media platforms into their educational systems to improve communication

with students and the overall quality of student life (Burbules, 2016). Twitter was used to discuss material, organize study groups, post class announcements, and connect with classmates (Junco, R.; Heiberger, G.; Loken, E., 2011). YouTube also improved students' digital skills and provided opportunity for peer learning and problem solving (Sherer and Shea, 2011). Today Khan Academy is still in use and its continuing positive impact on education is seen as well (Severance, 2015).

ANALYSIS OF DATA/FINDINGS

As the discipline ended, other findings were obtained from a questionnaire answered by all the 200 respondents.

Table 1

Stakeholders	D.El.Ed. Students	B.Ed. Students	M.Ed. Students	Faculty	Management/ Administration
Number of respondents	60	60	20	40	20

Table 2

Highest Educational Qualification of Respondents

Gender	D.Phil.	Ph.D.	P.G.	U.G.	XII	Total
Female	00	10	26	43	21	100
Male	02	19	22	39	18	100
Total	02	29	48	82	39	200

Source: Self Survey

Table 3

Age Groups of Respondents

Age Group	Below 21 Years	21-30 Years	31-40 Years	41-50 Years	Above 50 Years	Total
Number of respondents	33	106	34	23	04	200

Source: Self Survey

BENEFITS OF DSMNT IN ODL EDUCATION

Digital Social Media Technology can help to aid teachers in communicating with students even when they are outside of the classroom (Faizi, El Afia, and Chiheb, 2013). Feedback can be submitted so quickly over social media (Magda and Hanna, 2012). Now, in order to convince the teachers, students and management to use DSMNT in ODL education we need to share the following benefits.

The analysis based on the percentage of consent of the respondents divided into four categories in Table 4 shows that the most important statement of consent in the benefits of digital social media technology is increase in teaching and practice. An analysis of Table 4 shows that the difference in the percentage of consent is small in some factors

and the difference is high in some other factors. For example, 24 per cent of undergraduate students and 47 per cent of postgraduate students consider the cost of activity to be low. While teachers consider operating cost as minimum but management does not.

Institutionalising practices that increase the time and energy students spend engaging in these types of activities, as in this research, student-teacher engagement in utilised social media through blog space with a supportive “My Unisa” learning management platform may increase. This increase in teacher-student participation may also enhance the potentiality that students, teachers or researchers will remain in their teaching practice curriculum. Increased academic persistence would inevitably have a favourable impact

Table 4

Percentage of respondents who fully agreed

Detail of benefits	B.Ed./ D.El.Ed.	M.Ed.	Faculty/ Teachers	Management/ Administration
Increase in teaching and practice	96	100	100	89
Low cost of activity	24	47	91	39
Improvement of image	93	99	95	91
Interaction with students and colleagues	83	93	98	78
Flexibility and mobility	79	89	91	82
Personal development	92	100	100	91
Improvement in efficiency	98	100	100	96
Innovative skills/inventive thinking	49	94	66	52
Social justice/equality	43	91	93	53
Updating information/Global Awareness	88	100	69	64

Source: Self Survey

on their continued progress towards degree completion and promote academic success in comparison to the low engaged students (van Wyk, 2013b; Kennedy, 2000; Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005). In addition, the nature of teacher-student-people-teacher discussions or interactions can have important or effective repercussions for student motivation and introduction, as can effective, positive and individual or group interactions with lecturers or student interactions when providing unsuccessful learning. It may increase intellectual commitment. Support is needed to help the student overcome educational challenges (van Wyck, 2012; Chickering and Ehrmann, 1996). Social digital media can be used to facilitate and increase the number of student discussions or interactions with lecturers by overcoming the constraints of time and destination. As a result, opportunities for students to ask questions as well as receive resources and feedback from their lecturers can increase performance levels. In addition to often being very convenient, Chickering and Ehrman (1996) note that social media/technology can also be a less startling form of teacher-student interaction than asking questions in front of a classroom or spacious lecture hall or student conference room.

ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING TECHNOLOGIES

1. Enables two-way communication in real or ultimate time

2. Enables two-way communication in real or ultimate time
3. Mitigates geographical constraint
4. Encourages self-placed learning
5. It is user-friendly

Role of Digital Social Media Networking Technology in teaching and learning

This technology has proven its role during the closure of educational institutions and in ODL. The role of this technology is explained below:

1. It is an effective customised learning tool between students and teachers. The usefulness of this tool has been proven during this pandemic.
2. It is a tool to measure learning independently for each student.
3. It is a follow-up tool of face-to-face teaching mode.
4. It is a tool to follow the student.
5. It is a great tool for assessing the students.
6. Through the tools, students engage in interactive activities and peer learning.

In this question was asked as to how often are stakeholders/participants' frequency use of a variety of Digital Social Media Networking Technologies resources to discuss/complete the assignment/practice of teaching/workshop/internship/content based methodology/school based activities or other.

In Table 5, the majority of respondents (81%) indicated that

Frequency of Digital Social Media Networking Technologies Use

Table 5
Percentage of respondents who fully agreed

Survey Question: Used DSMTs to work with other stakeholders				
Stakeholders	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
D.El.Ed. Students	23 (14)	47 (28)	25 (15)	05 (03)
B.Ed. Students	38 (23)	52 (31)	10 (06)	00 (00)
M.Ed. Students	45 (09)	40 (08)	15 (03)	00 (00)
Faculties	48 (19)	42 (17)	10 (04)	00 (00)
Management or Administration	25 (05)	45 (09)	25 (05)	05 (01)
Total	35 (70)	46 (93)	17 (33)	02 (04)

Source: Self Survey

Note: Number of respondents shown in brackets

they often (46%) to very often (35%) used DSMNTs, discussion forums and other activities with class friends outside of study room to prepare course assignments and other activities. Most of the respondents who agree very often are professors while the least percentage are D.El.Ed. students, i.e., 48 per cent and 23 per cent respectively. The highest percentage of respondents who agree with it is 25 per cent among D.El.Ed. students and management while on average, it is 17 per cent. The percentage of respondents who agree with the never statement is 5 per cent only among D.El.Ed. students and management.

These are the five important types of teaching methods for a teacher. It depends on the teacher to implement one of these teaching methods according to the need and environment of the classroom. Lecture method has been used in teaching since ancient times. Even today, this method has taken an

important place in Indian schools. Lecture refers to teaching the text in the form of speech. The thinking level of the students is expanded by the question-answer method and it also develops their memory power. Listening to stories and telling a lot helps children to learn language in primary classes. Story listening is interesting for children as well as enhances their creativity. Many a times, children tell their friends by making desired changes in the story they heard. In role-playing method, the student teacher has to fulfill the role of both the teacher and the student in its practice. The student teacher has to teach a small topic to her peers only. His/her other fellows take on the role of students. A field trip is to take a group of people on a journey away from their normal environment. For example, visiting the zoo, garden and museum is a part of school life. The analysis of the mediums of DSMTs for the

Table 6

The Mediums of Dsmts for the Top Five Teaching Methods

Method	Rank - 1	Rank - 2	Rank - 3	Rank - 4	Rank - 5
Lecture	Facebook	YouTube	WhatsApp	Telegram	Blogs
Question-Answer	Quora	WhatsApp	Messenger	Twitter	Telegram
Storytelling	YouTube	Facebook	WhatsApp	Blogs	Instagram
Role-playing	YouTube	Instagram	Facebook	WhatsApp	Snap-chat
Field trip	WhatsApp	Instagram	Facebook	Snapchat	Skype

Source: Self Survey

above teaching methods has the following results.

Barriers to stakeholders’ use of Digital Social Media Networking Technologies

A critical look at some of the barriers to the use of social media in higher education are concerns about privacy, integrity of student submissions, inconsistent social media policy, separate course and personal account, grading and assessment, measures of

effectiveness, lack of integration with learning management systems (LMS), and time and resources to learn or use social media tools (Madden, 2010, 2012). According to Conn and Brady (2008), social networking sites have the potential to expose college students to inappropriate online content, fears of online identity theft and student-based cyberbullying, or online student harassment. According to Lederer (2012) social media could be a distraction in the

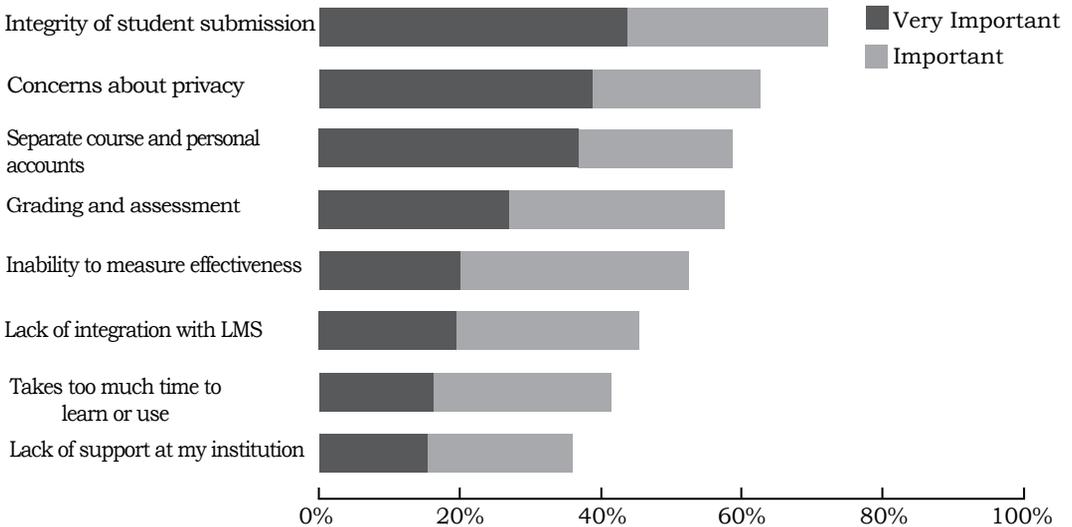


Fig. 1: Barriers to stakeholders’ use of DSMN technologies

teaching-learning process because it can divert learners' attention from classroom discussions as well as disrupt the learning process for students by deflecting their focus. Keen (2007) perceived quality of content as a major concern. Benito-Ruiz (2009) cited information overload as another challenge. The students misuse social media sites, when it is used for instructional purposes (Klopfer, Osterweil, Groff and Haas, 2009). The picture is the same for 2013, as faculty continue to cite a number of barriers between digital social media and the classroom. Over 69 per cent report that "lack of conscientiousness or integrity of student submissions" is an important or very important barrier, and 64 per cent say "privacy concerns" are an important or very important barrier. Conclusion that teachers have not widely or unintentionally adopted social media for teaching purposes; they have many concerns.

Barriers to stakeholders' use of Digital Social Media Networking Technologies

In an effort to understand better the nature of their privacy concerns from the figure above, all faculty who rated privacy as an important or very important barrier to teaching utilisation of digital social media were asked a set of more detailed questions. These questions were aimed at determining what aspects they found the most troubling, concerning privacy and social media

in their classes. The findings show that it is not a single challenge or issue that bothers the teacher – they have a high degree of concern with many aspects of privacy.

Faculties with concerns about privacy were asked about five different specific privacy issues for students and faculty. Over 79 per cent of the respondents stated that they "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" that each of these 5 areas represent an important area of concern. A large proportion (over 80%) of faculty also reported that they were concerned about "personal privacy" for students as well as for themselves. However, this opinion was not as strongly held as those on class discussions, as most faculty only "somewhat agree" that they are concerned about risks to personal and student privacies. The highest level of concern is about class discussions—over two-thirds of the faculty said that they "strongly agree" that non-class members "view" or "participate in class discussions" is an issue. The degree of faculty concern was only slightly less than those outside of class would be able to "view other class materials." By contrast, the majority of faculty say that they "strongly agree" when asked about their concern for privacy of class discussions and materials.

The DSMNT or Online Distance Learning (ODL) teacher, Easton (2003) claimed that the faculty had two roles, specifically beginning from an instructional or educational

designer to an interaction facilitator when online courses were introduced.

Duncan, Kenworthy, and McNamara (2012) found that in addition to the roles of leading and directing the online learning platform to reach task or goals, online teachers must also be aware of the balance of teaching time and the flexibility of problem-solving tasks that may sometimes occur while working.

They will be required to impinge upon online goals or task-based learning or discussions regarding the students' new roles. It has eliminated common chatting time preferable than face-to-face discussions. Faculties emphasised that students' views of the optimum online language students included self-motivation, originality of work, and timeliness of assignments.

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT

- 78 per cent of faculty members are using Digital Social Media Networking Technologies in courses they teach or for professional careers outside the classroom.
- 29 per cent posted contents related to the course for outside the class learning.
- 34 per cent of faculty members asked students to view Digital Social Media Networking Technologies as part of course assignment.
- 15 per cent students commented in course related posts through Digital Social Media Networking Technologies.

- Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube are mostly used.

CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 epidemic, the activities of direct contact have come to a standstill, so Digital Social Media Technology will prove to be a milestone in this situation. Education, teaching and training is a continuous process; this technology is very useful to prevent this process from getting blocked and it will continue to expand in the future. The rapid development of technology impacts not only people's lives in general, but also education (Concannon et al., 2005). In such critical moments as the COVID-19 lockdown, distance methods of learning are irreplaceable when it comes to supporting the educational process. Analysis of survey showed that Digital Social Media Networking Technologies was a positive strategy in developing and reaching the objectives of the discipline. As discussed, difficulties were observed; however, they may have resulted from lack of computer skills by some of the students. It is worth mentioning that, despite their problems in participating in the forums, the discussions presented high-quality content. Indeed, the increasing figure research regarding Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) and its use in discontinuous areas, most specifically in ODL or online education, gives evidence that it can lead to a weighty transformation in

how we frame of structured learning spheres in the future. This technology has the potential to replace the traditional human relationship between teachers and students. It is now able to motivate the pupils with much control. Better guidance can be provided by this technology resulting in a more satisfying learning experience for the students. Literally, during the pandemic and in the modern educational landscape, digital social media networking technology has changed the entire educational process. Digital social media technology has provided a single environment in the field of education so that students can adapt for their future and can pursue academic activities through innovative dimensions. New and innovative activities are going on even during this pandemic as many meeting platforms are being used for online classes. Findings of majority respondents believe that Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) are precious tools or technology for teaching, and that social media sites can be precious tools for ODL or collaborative and online learning. It is a strenuous assertion that “Digital Social Media Networking Technologies (DSMNT) are not a part of our social life, it is fully part of our digital living.”

FUTURE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The greatest challenge to future research and the usefulness of these results is in understanding the use or lack of using social mass media resources by low engaged students. During this pandemic, highly engaged students in studies have made great use of digital social media techniques and are at high utilisation of resources. This should not come as an amazement to teachers. It is a natural tendency by a gifted student to make good use of the resources available in educational institutions; social media proves helpful in its development. It is recommended that the benefits of using digital social media for endorsement or to support teaching and learning will not be fully realised until there is a better understanding of how the social nature of these social media resources can be utilized to entice low engaged or disengaged students to interact in educationally purposeful ways with their high-engaged peers and instructors so that it contributes to the success of students. Future researchers could consider investigating the link between the use of social media and academic performance.

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