

Usage of Virtual and Social Media for Distance Education in India and Iran

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Abstract

Literacy is the main foundation for social and economic growth. The usage of Internet facilitates teaching and learning. Social media is making education easier than before but for optimum result in developing countries, there is a need for using virtual training with some considerations. Due to widespread illiteracy in India E learning will take some time to catch up. On the other hand, e-learning is still in its infancy in oil rich Iran and it seems that there is a need for more attention towards modern training and a new style of education. MOOC- Massive Open Online Course is fast emerging as the favourite destination for open learning breaking the stereotypes of traditional methods of teaching. The main objective of this study is to understand the impact of social networking sites in distance education system.

Keywords: Virtual Training, Distance Education, Social Media, Web Based Learning, Facebook.

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INTRODUCTION

According to John Tiffin et al. (2003), 'knowledge is at the University, at the library, in a section, in a course of study, or at the head of an academic'. At the beginning of human civilisation, knowledge was gained under the guidance of teachers, books and philosophy. Teaching approach was based on manuscripts and traditional oral forms of rhetoric. According to Management Association Information Resources (2010) now modern science-based knowledge is based on rationalism, discovery, assessment, formulas, and something that can be purchased or captured. In the new millennium, there is a belief that if a person is not able to use the computer,

is not literate. Today we can argue that if a computer is not connecting to the Internet, it is useless (Hook, 2002; Quoted by Esmail Ghadimi, 2014). As Management Association, Information Resources explained (2010) that recorded ideas and knowledge seem to have their roots in expert systems and computer programs that can be used to answer a range of problems by mimicking expert humans. While explicit knowledge in the form of texts, films, paintings or manuscripts, music lends itself to be captured and managed as knowledge management, software courses have also been

introduced. Ted is a multimedia traditional classroom environment where learning through all five senses, but primarily through writing and speech (Tiffin and Rajasingham, 2003) occurs.

According to Aliasghar Kia (2010) there are some issues even Europeans emphasised. For example, a person who just sat in front of a computer and gained Ph.D but did not have any social communication with others, may not have the expertise to manage an institute with 30-40 employees and run it well. The second issue is that some countries have few students so using e-learning is more useful than have a class with only one or two students. But in Iran we are faced with student density so we need not copy e-learning from western countries. The purpose of virtual training in Iran should focus on courses which lack facilities or for which our traditional system is not sufficient. According to Lalita Rajasinghamat 'this time of the "spectacle" in which our programs are increasingly electronically with television, the Internet and the World Wide Web, image processing and making sense of the meaning of the images that we are increasingly bombarded with, skills become critical.'(www.eurodl.org) To use the facility of new technology independence and flexibility to teach, organisational structure of the institutions must change. Changing the traditional approach to government and private sector investment and participation is required.

E-learning

According to Tony Karter (2007) e-learning 2.0 was invented by a Canadian researcher Stephen Downes, and it is from the general trend of e-learning that Web 2.0 is derived. In its simplest form, Web 2.0 means that everyone should be able to easily create and contribute content on the Internet. These range from writing a blog, a video presentation on YouTube, to put images on Flickr, with the help of written content on the wiki like Wikipedia, as well as developing a social network similar to MySpace. One interesting result of Web 2.0 is something called collective intelligence. Five main global generation technology distance learning by Taylor (2001) have identified the correspondence model (first generation), the multimedia (second generation), e-learning model (third generation), flexible learning model (generation IV) and flexible model smart (fifth generation). Trisha Dowerah Baruah (2011) wrote that many of the e-learning technologies can be divided into two groups: synchronous and asynchronous. In the case of synchronous technology, the online delivery where all participants are "present" at the same time the organisation is in need of a timeline. Khalil Sadat (2009) 'In asynchronous online delivery it is the participants who access course materials at their own time.'

Social Networks

Karen Santana (2013) states, 'Social networks inherently encourage collaboration and interaction. They can be used as a motivational tool to promote self-efficacy among students'. In a study conducted by Bowers & Campbell (2008) Facebook, as a tool of motivation for students in a period of growth, was leading. Social networking is important for coaches. Rachel Jones (2015) uses social media website, Twitter, daily chats and shares information between teachers with hashtag (label) "#edtech" by sending it during the day and coaches at the international level linked via the Internet. This is shared learning network in the world. As Trisha Dowerah Baruah (2012) explains that the play Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) is a multiplayer video game capable of supporting hundreds or thousands of players simultaneously. Cartrider, World of Warcraft MMO are some examples. Baruah says, 'through Social Media, a person can also publish news and views via the web'. User is a prime example of such media. This is a social news website. Connect to Facebook, Digg dialogue, bar Avatar, Avatar API (application programming interface) are important features of the User.

According to Leila Karimi et al (2013) "Statistics FB", 85 percent of students at four-year universities use FB, which most of them do daily (comScore, 2007). Although FB for educational purposes (Dalsgaard, 2008) has been created, it is argued that they may informally discuss and share knowledge and students are encouraged by their intermediaries (Anderson, 2008; McLaughlin, and Lee, 2008; Selwyn, 2007). Several sites also draw interest from higher education institutions, faculty and coaches and their potential for scientific purposes. Use of FB can help students adjust to college life, develop friendships (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007), and experiment with English. Since its introduction, a global streaming media attention is on the phenomenon of FB. However, most of the academic research on this topic is about North America (Bush, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

Thomas Friedman (2006) in the late 1980s and early 1990s said, ‘using the Internet requires considerable expertise and was often conducted over black-and-white text terminals meaning everyone, no matter what computer they were using, could see the same web pages, access the same data’. In the early 1990s, a scientist named Tim Berners-Lee at CERN used programming language for writing Web pages (called HTML) that allow authors to do things like “links” from one page to another and to store and share images. Japanese writer Yoneji Masuda pioneered the Information Society term used to describe a society finally to the point where constructive force in the production of valuable information for the development of society (Mou Mukherjee - Das, 2014) was moving. Punjab Technical University in the 1970s and 1980s acquired extensive information society concept to explain social, economic and technological change operated by information and communication technology based on microelectronics and digital computer networks that generate, process, and distribute information on the basis of the knowledge accumulated in the nodes of the network. Hiltz (1986) coined the term ‘virtual classroom’ for the use of computer generated communications ‘to create an electronic analogue of the communications forms that usually occur in a classroom including discussion as well as lectures and tests (Pagani, Margherita, 2009).’ “Educational Networking” has defined itself as the use of social networking technologies for educational purposes (www.educationalnetworking.com). Negroponte (1995) said, according to Webster’s College Dictionary (1981) Virtual reality is that which has a “reality effect ‘in terms of education, where teachers and students come together as bits of information and not nuclear material.’ In the present day we have the World Wide Web, which is the largest library in the world has ever known. (www.eurodl.org)

B. Previous Studies

Anderson M. in research about “Virtual Universities—Future Implication for Students and Academics for Global Services Australia” (www.ascilite.org) has pointed out the Problems associated with the virtual university : the education of academics to use technology, security issues related to electronic testing, remote dial-in access, costs associated with staff training, and technical

support. Once again, although the authors have identified problems associated with the virtual university, they have failed to talk about the future consequences for students and academics. Finally, the literature review revealed a number of guidelines to consider when to make the transition to a virtual university. These guidelines include: the promotion of user participation and planning, design and implementation of training programs for faculty, allow students to submit their assignments online, and provide students with the opportunity to participate in online class discussions.

Subrahmanyam C. V and el. (2013) in “Technology & Online Distance Mode of Learning” have opined that, Universities or Institutions offering ges (www.nraismc.com). For Castells (2005) the network society is a social structure based on network Online Distance Learning can give up the conventional methods and can take up the Hybrid Learning as a tool in their course offerings in order to get the best results. Although, at first, seems to be a combination of training implementation expenses, costs can be recovered easily and can easily reach break-even in a short time. Nicole B. Ellison et al. (2009) says as more systems emerge, there will be more capacity for groups to organise and engage in collective action, a characteristic of civil society. Trisha Dowerah Baruah (2012) in a study on “the effectiveness of social media as a communication tool and its potential and its relationship; a micro-level study” reported that social media can be effective for building social authority; individuals or organisations can establish themselves as experts in their fields, and then they can begin to influence in this area. So, one of the fundamental concepts in social media is that a message can be controlled completely, but we can help the debate. Social media technology reaches audiences around the world.

Jafar Yaghoubiandandel (2008) on “Virtual Students Perceptions of E-Learning in Iran” claimed a significant relationship between the level of Internet use, the use of computers, internet access, shortcomings of the traditional higher education system and assessment of competence in e-learning students. The regression lines to predict changes in the perception of students are allowed linear regression to predict a change in perception about e-learning which students are allowed to use. Stepwise regression analysis showed that 68% ($R^2 = 0.680$) of the variation in students’ perceptions of e-learning was determined by four variables: students’ assessment of competence in e-learning, Internet access, computer and Internet use, and assessing the shortcomings of traditional higher education system. As the authors of this article have proposed, developing e-learning systems can be used as a solution for the situation in Iran. If e-learning has a meaningful role in higher education, it

is important that universities focus on students' attitudes and their expectations. Ali Asghar Kia (2010) on "a look on virtual learning" predicted that during the next 10 years, the majority of universities in Iran will take action to recruit and train students in electronics for operation of virtual education on a very broad level.

Vahideh Alipour (2010) in a study on "Culture of education, social - cultural factors, and its role in the development of virtual learning in Iran" has considered: Learning should be to educate the public and raise all sectors of the population. It should be noted that the period should be set for the use of virtual training. (Leila Karimi and el. 2013) "Perspective of Iranian University Students about Academic Use of Social Networking Sites: A Study of Facebook" showed that undergraduate university students in Iran, showed more interest in social media like Facebook. The findings endorse earlier research (Downes's, 2007; Fernandez and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; and H. et al., 2012). For example, Downes's (2007) found that FB is distinct from the SNSD because of its stronger roots in the academic community. They enjoy social networking sites to capture, search and find friends. In students' engagement they use Facebook to communicate with classmates. Latest information related to the use of FB should be integrated completely into the higher education process in the future studies. In addition, the findings of this study confirmed that students use Facebook for academic purpose. Finally, the findings of this study confirmed that significant differences between men and women in the scientific use of FB instance do not exist.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This study has following objectives:

RQ1. How do social networking sites make a difference in teaching – learning in higher education?

RQ2. How do intervention of virtual learning and social media networks in Distance Education influence higher education in India and Iran?

Method of Study

The nature of this research is descriptive and exploratory depending on secondary data documented by government and other organizations. Statistics, programmes and policy of the government in the form of documented information was accessed to understand and analyze the intervention of virtual learning and social media in distance education in India and Iran.

E-learning and Usage of Social Media in India

India may succeed in adopting e-learning having watched the west and is working hard to implement it. Over the past few years, Ministry of Human Resource Development has been trying to reach the goal of making education accessible to every corner of the country. Still many parts of the country are in the dark about e-learning (Malik, 2009). According to Venkata Subrahmanyam C. V et al. (2013) Andhra Pradesh government took the initiative for the first time in 1982, to start Andhra Pradesh Azad University (now renamed as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University) in Hyderabad. In 1985, the Government of India, through an Act of Parliament established Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for the sole purpose of promoting continuing education across India. Now according to Venkata Subramanyam CV. et al. (2013) there are 14 Open Universities in India - one national and 13 state universities. Abbreviations like CBT (Computer Based Training), IBT (Internet Based Training) or WBT (Web Based Training) have been used as a synonym for e-learning. As Pagani et al. (2008) wrote an e-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based training, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration. Content via Internet, intranet / extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM (Elearn frame, 2004) is presented. This can be self-paced and instructor-led and includes media or in the form of text, image, animation, video and sound.

‘The year 2011-2012 saw the launch of this new phenomenon of MOOC

– Massive Open Online Course, wherein faculty from the top universities, through several new organisations made complete courses available online for free, to anyone who is willing to enrol’ (Hindu, 1 July 2014). MOOC courses in higher education in countries such as India and China could be one such intervention with unlimited participation and open access. MOOC courses began in 2008, but their potential as a valuable tool in Higher Education was recognised completely by 2012.

A large number of universities in the United States, Europe and other parts of the world are now offering the course to supplement training-learning. In India, MOOC courses have not yet formally entered the wider university system, except for some IITs floating MOOC courses. However, it is interesting to note that in about a quarter of all registered MOOC courses around the world, India is second only to the United States, clearly underlining the fact that language learners in India are quick to adopt new technologies. But it should also be noted that the rate of successful completion MOOC courses around the world being 5 to 15 % can MOOC courses be useful in a country like India? The most attractive feature of this period is the ease with which both students and teachers can access the content. MOOC courses in high-quality conventional courses like engineering and science reach people in different places, thus bridging the gap between well-established educational institutions and the not so established ones. As Sheikh Omran (2012) claimed: Educational institutions need appropriate strategies in place for the successful deployment of e-learning process. But, call it Web-based training (WBT) or, less border education e-learning is here to stay. E-learning will soon replace classroom learning in India. In addition, the government also comes forward with plans to improve the technical quality of new graduates inviting them to go to research and teaching career. E-Learning is rapidly growing and seems to take control of the world because of its educational benefits. (SAHA, 2010)

E-learning and Usage of Social Media in Iran

JafarYaghoubi et al. (2008) states that many universities in developing countries like Iran are investing significant capital to develop the virtual university or virtual parts in conventional universities. E-learning in Iran is still in its infancy and there are only a few online programs. E-learning history in Iran currently does not exceed more than 6 years, yet from a realistic point of view we may say that electronic-based learning in Iran has been around for 5 years, delivered by both the private sector and government organisations. A lot of virtual universities or centers such as University of Technology, University of Science and Technology, Virtual University of Shiraz and some colleges and centers such as the Virtual Islamic penal centers and schools have increased. Yaghoubi says: The process of changing traditional education to modern style in Iranian society contains many important problems, according to recent studies (Dilmaghani, 2003; Nouri, 2003) are, lack a realistic understanding about the process of learning the educational needs of students at different levels, faulty implementation of computer hardware and software, poor education

infrastructure, IT realistic point of view or weakness, no strategic plan for higher education budget and equipment, lack of space affecting the political, social and economic aspects and lack of information literacy. Leila, Karimi et al. (2013) explained that although FB use by university students in Iran has grown rapidly in the past, to date a search of major library databases and online journals yielded no results for studies on FB within the Iranian students particularly, in recognition of students' views on the use of this site for scientific purposes. Karimi added due to the lack of research, studies on FB being used for scientific purposes should be done. As a result, this paper contributes to the growing discussion on students' perspective in using FB for academic purposes and to explore to what extent university students are using FB to engage in study-related activities.

Maryam Haghshenas et al. (2014) reported that at work, informal learning through questioning colleagues, viewing other uncoordinated and independent learning activities accounted for 80% of one's knowledge about his / her work. A significant value in many social media sites are seen for classroom use. The survey of different schools around the world shows online videos on YouTube or other online video sites as having been the greatest value for use in classes. All social media sites cannot be seen as valuable for teaching and Facebook and Twitter are not considered as having value in class. A large part of the faculty believes that Facebook and Twitter have negative value for classroom use. Talk about the difference between positive and negative social use in higher education continues but no one can consistently grow fast and efficient sharing of information among peers.

Despite all of the above, the Iranians began to find ways of using the media to develop and grow. New technologies create a new structure of learning and teaching in this country. People and Organisations have started few websites on virtual learning such as *Kelasedars*, *Maktankhooneh*, *Khanacademy*, *Takhtesefid* and *Iranacademia* which all have options of downloading, uploading, sharing between social networks, chatting, writing comments, using videos and sounds for school and university students.

FINDINGS

Harishchandra S. B. (2014) believed the digital revolution and economic globalisation become the driving forces of economic and social development. Rajasingham refers to the problems associated with this change can no longer be solved by traditional means. At no time is a suggestion

in this article that there are alternative conventional virtual university campuses. They will be complementary and seek to work with them and through them. Both exist in tandem because education is about contextualising, and network connectivity environment in the global environment, learning to choose where, when and how they access learning. Yaghoubi (2008) believes E-learning in Iran is still in its infancy and there are only a few online programs. The current model of education in Iran is through the traditional methods of teaching and learning using notes and discussion in class. While connecting to the Internet in universities, using these new media need to cast in all areas.

According to Iran's standing in the world, it should soon make greater use of new media in schools and universities adopted than before, and free communication between people inside and outside the country who can exchange ideas and knowledge in the sphere of the educational system. Yaghoubi noted the deployment of advanced institutions of higher education and colleges equipped with modern e-learning as one of the urgent needs of today's developing countries like Iran. But learning systems such as stability depend on sound, realistic instructional strategies. New learning technologies need to be targeted so that they may teach practical skills to students. Iran with long history of connection with modernity and a young population seeking knowledge from around the world needs to empower its abilities and facilities for making Internet available all over the country and let people, including more media, freedom of choice. This country, considering its long history of knowledge and philosophy, has potential to use Internet and social media to introduce itself and its people to the world and encourage all to get more idea about Middle East civilisation. With an astounding population of 1.25 billion and almost half of them under the age of 25 years, India faces huge challenges as it plans to fulfil the wishes of its people. However, despite these challenges, it has the potential to become a leading country in many areas of development, including education. As Pavan Chauhan (1 July 2014, the Hindu newspaper) says India needs a knowledge-based society, with access to good education, especially higher education. The current model of higher education in India, is mainly from developed countries, adopted largely from the university, limited in its range of learning, and basically trying to adapt to the needs of the industrial world. While it is true that higher education in India has enabled social mobility for many, it is also true that those who have access to higher education belong to the more affluent sections of society. To change the character limit in higher education and meet the growing demands of students and teachers, we need to develop and adopt innovative ways of teaching and learning. We need to provide more equitable access to higher education through changes in existing models. It requires a clear and real disrupter that will usher in change.

CONCLUSION

We need to bring changes in the education system. This development should be a division of labor between formal educational processes and media. The formation of both physical and electronic education expanding it to all classes and strata of society, especially deprived areas, is one aspect of reconstruction. Classrooms equipped with teaching aids and use of the Internet and new technology is inevitable. E-learning represents an important growing trend in the use of technology to facilitate learning students to study virtual and distance education and social media. This Study shows importance of e-learning and its role in changing the face of education.

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