Social Media as a Venue for Online Class Collaboration

Joane Serrano & Yasele Yambao

University of the Philippines Open University

INTRODUCTION

- The role of social media has shifted in recent years. What used to be a platform for socialization has now become a venue for collaborative engagements.

- Recent studies (Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane 2012; Lester 2012; Rambe, 2012; Brady, Holcomb, Smith 2010) showed the evolving role of social media in education and academic networking.

- Although, there are some educators, teachers and students who find social media as somehow not appropriate for academic discourses and exchanges, there are also those who find it quite conducive and convenient.

- Social media allows people to participate in conversations instead of merely being on the receiving end.

- According to Kietzman et al. (2011), people and organizations use social media to share, co-create, and discuss user-generated content.

In the Philippines, Facebook is the most visited site based on the data generated by Alexa.

Philippines ranks eighth in the world in terms of the number of Facebook users – with more than 30 million registered users (CheckFacebook.com)

The Gap...

According to Babac (2011), social media is a new and rapidly evolving phenomenon which has been quickly adopted by the practitioners but still an area that lacks empirical evidence and academic attention.
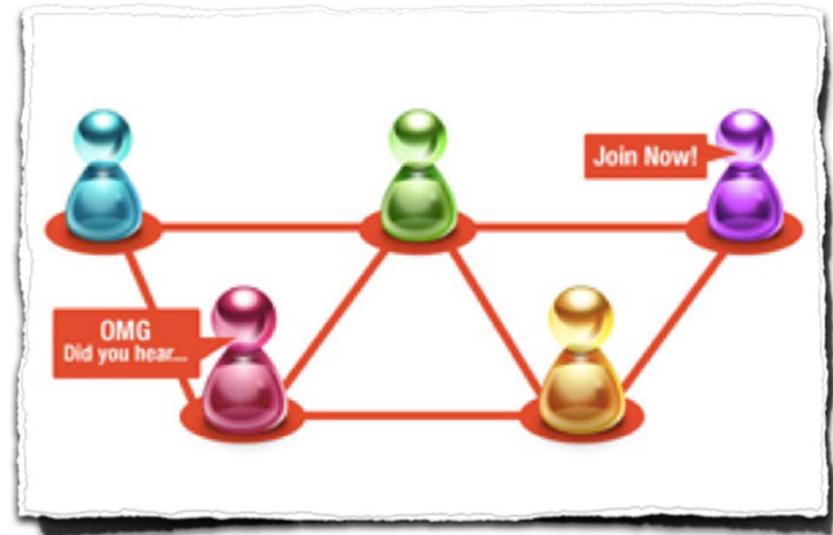
Objectives

This study aimed to examine facebook as venue for online class collaboration.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Find out how UPOU students view facebook as a venue for academic collaboration;
2. Determine the challenges, constraints, and difficulties encountered by the UPOU students in using facebook for online collaboration;
3. Identify the potentials and possibilities of facebook as a site for online collaboration.

METHODOLOGY

The respondents for this study were the students of the ENRM 252 (Environmental Advocacy) students enrolled during the 2nd Semester 2013-2014. The students were asked about their view on the use of Facebook for online collaboration.

There were a total of 43 students enrolled in the course.

One of the requirements of the course was to develop the UPOU Green Website – an environmental advocacy using the Internet and online technology.

Output of the collaboration through Facebook

METHODOLOGY

For this class, the use of Facebook was not part of the course design and requirement but was initiated by the students themselves. They created two Facebook groups for each of the major tasks assigned to them – the Design and Development Team; and the Content and Writing Team.

The students were asked to accomplish a set of questions about their experience in making use of facebook in their collaborative works.

The answers were analyzed through thematic approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Facebook as a venue for academic collaboration

• Platform for exchanging of ideas, experiences and insights
• Avenue to create network for future collaborative projects in environmental advocacy
• Venue for on-the-job training (OJT) for the students on how to do an actual environmental advocacy through online collaboration
• Opportunity for the entire class to get to know one another on various levels, and gained new friends.

Challenges, Constraints, and Difficulties

- Communication was one of the challenges; maintaining regular communication among class participants is the biggest challenge especially that most of the students have field work
- Difficulty in coordinating with one another online since there are different schedules, and some are under different time zones.
- The challenge is to harmonize interdisciplinary people to work well. It needs creativity and resourcefulness.
- Biggest challenge is how to integrate all the ideas of the different groups. Since they have all different ideas on how to come up with a website that will serve as the gateway to the different environment activites and programs.

Challenges, Constraints, and Difficulties

- Not everyone are online so it takes time to collaborate
- Poor connectivity
- For some, Facebook was blocked in their offices so they can't work during office hours. It was good that they also made use of other softwares such as gdrive, gmail group and other apps of google and yahoo.
- Level of commitment of some students. Some students were not diligent enough to find out their responsibilities and roles so most of them came late. Not everyone contributed to the class project.
- Don't have facebook account or do not want to use facebook.

Potentials and Possibilities

- Facebook has the potential to empower more and engage the learners in academic discourse
- Students are able to discuss more freely and there is spontaneity in the discussion
- Students have the freedom to post new topics or anything that they feel have relevance to their class project
- The interactivity feature of Facebook allowed the students to share more and participate more frequently
- The students were able to share online resources more easily and were able to get feedback even just by the simple like button

CONCLUSION

Social Media such as Facebook proved to be an effective tool to foster academic collaboration among students and create ideas for future projects. Lester (2012) mentioned that infusing social media into communication preferences expands the options of students to visually display their ingenuity.

The functionalities of Facebook and the ease of use by the students allowed for more participation and interaction.

However, there many challenges encountered. It was a challenging task to separate class-related genuine ideas with some ideas that were not relevant to the project

RECOMMENDATIONS

- If Facebook will be used as part of an online class, it should be carefully planned and integrated in the instructional design of the course

- Facebook can be integrated in the LMS as one of the apps or functionalities which can complement LMS

- It was suggested that the inclusion of social media techniques in the lessons and the output will be a bonus part of assessment.