

USE OF FACEBOOK AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Luka Ngoyi, University of Zambia, Mwasile Niza Siuluta-University of Zambia, Jerry Muwamba-University of Zambia, Daliso Banda- University of Zambia, Jasper Hatilima- University of Zambia, Abraham Ngoyi- University of Zambia, and Shadreck Mpanga-University of Zambia

Technology is ubiquitous, embracing almost every part of our lives, our communities and our homes. In the field of education technology doesn't have a secondary role in the sole process of knowledge transferring especially because technology is becoming increasingly integrated into the lives of learners of all ages and groups. In particular of this technology is the use of Facebook as an education tool. Originally designed for college students in the United States in 2004, Facebook was created as a social networking website. Facebook later expanded to different educational settings. Facebook allows each user to create a profile, updating it with personal information such as home address, mobile phone number, interesting religious views and also allows people to form groups and post pictures. Today with approximately 800 million subscribers worldwide (according to www.internetworldstats.com), Facebook now has a diverse community of users at all levels of education and areas of society including companies and universities. This number of users all around the globe makes Facebook the most used social network out there. This has made Facebook to be integrated into the way teachers, lecturers and professors teach and administer courses. But like always, the use of Facebook as educational tool has been received with mixed feelings, concerns related to privacy and anxiety in the interaction with professors in this environment, a belief that doesn't serve an academic purpose and the opinion that facility should simply avoid "education appropriation" these backstage social space have been expressed. Yet other people have supported the notion of using Facebook as an education tool, as survey worldwide has shown.

Due to the fact a lot of students have Facebook accounts and have a high Facebook usage rate among students, there are a number of unique features that make is amendable to education pursuit. For example, Facebook is equipped with bulletin board, instant messaging, email and the ability to post pictures and videos. Most notably anyone can post information and collaborate within the system. Recently

Facebook opened up developments of download applications, which can further supplement the educational function of Facebook. This has enabled the ability and ease with which an individual (instructor or student) can upload photos and videos. Beyond high usage rates and some technological advantages, Facebook has provided numerous other pedagogical advantages to book teachers and students,

in that it connects students with other students, hence indirectly creating a learning community- a vital component of the student education (Baker, the works of higher education 1999, page 95-109). Facebook provides instructors opportunities and structures by which students can help and support one another by building their courses atop the community already established by the students themselves, for example the EEE FORUM page on Facebook enables students to interact and also helps the lecturer to distribute lecture notes and assignments, to more than 200 students. And statistics by (Hamann and Wilson, politics and policy ,2002, page 31) it was found that students who participated in the web enhanced class, outperformed those students in a traditional lecture format.

Facebook helps instructors connect with students about assignments, upcoming events, useful links and samples of work outside the class room. Students can use Facebook to contact classmates about questions regarding class assignments or examinations as well as collaborate on assignments and group projects in an online environment. Building on the face-to-face, teacher-student relationship, social networks allow students to have glimpse of the instructors profiles containing personal information, interests, background and friends which can enhance students motivation, effective learning and class room climate (Mazer et al ,communication education, 2007, page 1-17). Facebook effectively in teacher education courses will help facilitate perspective teachers to

model what they have learned in their own classroom. Teacher's education will not only benefit by the classroom advantages of Facebook, but also by learning professional Facebook etiquette.

Facebook has features that make help or make it to be able to be integrated into a course time which very easy to manipulate. Some of these features are; profile page- an instructor can choose to create a profile page for him/her, the profile page can be used to communicate with the students via Facebook email, IU, or posting on the wall. In addition, relevant videos, images and websites can also be included. Students could also be exposed to relevant and educational Facebook groups. Creating a group page for a class- a separate page can be created specifically for a course. Students can virtually find other classmates through this page, learn about their classmates, communicate with their classmates and professors can post/discuss relevant class information. Professors can send an announcement to the entire group, setup and remind students about events. The other facility the Facebook offers is Replacing/duplicating web course function on Facebook- discussions that that have traditionally have taken place on the web course board, can also occur on the Facebook discussion boards. Instant messaging functions are also available. On-line instructors can post information and websites on their profile and group page, for students to download and for the class as a whole.

Since student today demand more autonomy, connectivity, interaction and social-experience learning opportunities in the learning contexts (Mchouglin and Lee, software and participatory learning, 2007,). Because students complain about lacking opportunities for authentic communication due to non-personalized course content even when alternative delivery methods are employed, providing informal learning context for integrating emerging social networks into existing learning and teaching opportunities (Barlett-Bragg,2006).

Facebook has quickly become the social network site choice by college students and an integral part of the behind the scene college experience (Selwyn, learning media and technology, 2007, page 157-174). The proliferation of Facebook has created a culture in which youths participate more in creating and sharing content, profoundly changing the way students communicate interact and learn characteristic noted in the literature which recommends Facebook as a tool that can contribute significantly to the education are fostering positive relationship among students and encompassing students motivation and engagement (West et al 2009; Kabilan et al, 2010); involving students in achieving the learning tasks and successful transfer of knowledge (Madge et al, 2009); developing a positive attitude towards learning and improving the quality of learning (Pasek and hargittai,2009; Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010); developing inter personal intelligence, as well as critical thought,

developing of communication and interaction on the relationship between students and teachers outside the classes (Selwyn,2009)

Facebook is also used as an education tool due to the fact that it is independent of time and location, hence students or lecturers can send information even when they are not in the lecture theater or in the class room. This is facilitated by the ability to learn in more systematic manner and in shorter time, due to advanced technology. In the same context the lecture can have the ease of displaying the content, be it lecture notes and assignments. Facebook also helps to present courses that require laboratory applications to the student via simulations, animations and virtual laboratories. Archiving course content and synchronized class (virtual class) application. Facebook also creates more voluntary behavior on the side of students, for improving research, knowledge and skills in comparison to conventional programs.

Facebook can also be successfully used in the field of education, recommends educators that they may gain benefits such as program exchange, job announcements, creating relief funds or searching such funds, arranging concurrent or non-concurrent conferences and publishing studies conducted by themselves or their students. Moreover, studies such as course plan, activities etc. can be more efficient used by a larger number of educators over a database. Facebook provides a number of educational applications (apps), which

make it an exceptional education tool, some of these Apps are;

- I. WeRead: which students can use to talk about books they read and get to know what others read.
- II. Notely: students can use it to organize assignments, classes and notes.
- III. CiteMe: where students can learn how to properly include citations.

And some apps for the lectures or teachers are: Webinaria- which can help the teacher record their class lectures and post them on Facebook for the class to review. The other one is WorldCat. This helps to search for materials available at the libraries around the world, to help in their research.

Using Facebook can help lectures to interact among themselves and share information which can help the grow professionally also means that they need to join groups design specifically for educators and teachers where they share links and materials and talk about education issues, some of these groups are; Educators using Facebook, Education, Facebook for educators and Educators network.

Facebook increases the productivity of students and improves their interest in environmental issues as well as increase awareness of necessity for

taking action. Hence, it is our conjecture that the benefit of Facebook as an educational tool, capabilities can benefit both the instructor and the student by tapping into a greater number of learning styles, providing an alternative to the traditional lecture format, creating on-line classroom community and increasing teacher-student and student-student interaction. Therefore, efforts should be made by instructors to expand their pedagogical portfolio, promote active learning through learning community and to test the effectiveness of the on-line learning communities through social networks such as Facebook. Scholars should continue their investigation into these alternative teaching tools to determine if the benefits of creating cyber learning communities to complement the traditional classroom experience are worth the cost of retooling and restructuring. Furthermore, lecturer's preparation can be enhanced by creating opportunities for teachers in training to see, experience and effectively model lessons on Facebook in their future lectures.

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