Teaching and Learning Quality Enhancement through Social Media

Dr. Manishankar Chakraborty, Dr. Azzah Al Maskeri, Dr. Srinivasan Ramamoorthy & Mr. Majid Al-Rashdi, Ibra College of Technology, Sultanate of Oman.
E-mail: manishankar@gmail.com

Abstract
This paper studies the impact of using social media as a tool to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in a Higher Education Institute (HEI) set-up. The secondary social media related usage data was collected during spring and summer semesters of the academic year 2013-2014. The data were gathered while teaching Teamwork Management and Performance Appraisal & Productivity courses for Advanced Diploma and Bachelor students in the Business Studies Department of Ibra College of Technology. Course tutor’s personal Facebook page and YouTube were simultaneously used in delivering these courses, along with Slideshare, Micro-blog and Blog intermittently. The results showed that 57% female students liked the Facebook page as compared to 43% of their male counterparts. Direct or organic reach of the page for female students was 52% vis-à-vis that of 42% for the males. The paper also addresses the challenges faced by both the students and course lecturer while using social media. One of these challenges is the extra time needed on the part of the lecturer to respond to students queries given that the students were involved on a round the clock basis. Students were found to be hesitant to involve in peer learning and instead focused more on the lecturer input, a carry forward of the classroom environment in a virtual mode. Students also raised the issue of not having time to participate on the online discussions. In addition to that, students also faced difficulty with the availability and speed of the Internet connection. The comparison of student behavior online and in the classroom opened up newer vistas for consideration. The study recommends standards and strategies to measure/monitor the effectiveness of this tool.

Keywords:
Social Media based Teaching-Learning, Quality Enhancement, Higher Education Institution (HEI), Quality Management of Teaching and Learning in HEI.
**Introduction:**

Teaching and learning in Higher Education Institute (HEI) has undergone tremendous changes since the evolving of technologies. The need for technologies has always been felt by all sectors including that of HEI. Newby, Stepich, Lehman, & Russell (1996)[20] opined that the perfect blend of technology is essential while designing instruction by integrating computers. They added that the usage of media, results in learner-centered instruction, leading to the increase in the satisfaction level of both the learner and the teacher. Students of the present generation have an inclination and liking for contemporary technology based gizmos, viz. smart phones, handheld devices. The penchant for social media has offered tremendous potential for the existing and prospecting teaching-learning potentials. Irwin, Ball, Desbrow, & Leveritt (2012)[11] found that Facebook as a tool for teaching and learning has tremendous potential for collaborative and cooperative learning. A majority of the respondents in the study perceived that Facebook was an effective and useful mode to increase the student's participation. They also considered it as an effective platform to disseminate contents and announcements in a user-friendly manner. The present study understands the role and importance of social media in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in the HEI set-up of the Sultanate of Oman. It also analyzes the major interfaces of conventional pedagogical techniques with technological intervention, and its impact from an Omani cultural standpoint. Owston (1997)[18] stated that for technology to address the big problems, it should be in a position to answer three questions, (1) does it make learning more accessible, (2) does it promote improved learning, (3) does it accomplish the above two while containing, if not reducing, the per unit costs of education? Technology as an enabler should necessarily have to fulfill the aforesaid responsibilities, apart from adding value to the teacher-learner duo. The adoption of technology in the teaching-learning realm is much more than mere adoption or rejection of technology. It calls for crafting strategies in line with the plans of an organization. Bates (2003) [4] opined that the significant features of emergent teaching-learning strategy are based on the learning derived from the patterns of individual actions. He also added the importance of necessary customization according to time, place and cultural issues so as to make it more effective rather than blindly imitate it, only to withdraw at a later point in time. Furthermore, Bates (2003) [4] added that one need to understand the outcome of the cost-benefit analysis, vis-à-vis the prevailing situation and the one to be achieved. One needs to answer these questions to realize the same: what are the unique features of face to face teaching and for what kinds of learner are these essential, what
are the unique benefits of being on campus and what kind of learners will benefit most from this, what do the necessary processes of planning and managing technology do to the culture of an academic institution? The need to have the right kind of understanding between the lecturers/trainers along with the education leaders and student of the institution is important. It allows the smooth handling of the situations owing to technological implementation. Jacobsen (1998) [12] reported that a diffusion of innovation framework and adopter categories were critical in determining faculty innovativeness with technology for teaching and learning. The study conducted through respondents from two major North American Universities revealed that there was a need for an appropriate balance between many variables. For example, the usage patterns of learner and teacher, the computer experience, technology in teaching and learning, general self-efficacy, ability to welcome changes in teaching and learning, along with the associated incentives and barriers for the teachers and the learners. Bates and Epper (2001) [5] highlighted the need to train faculties on the usage of technology in teaching and learning so as to make it part of the working environment. They added that huge investments made in terms of technology procurement and implementation would be helpful only when the faculties classified as “early adopters” are allowed to experiment with technology in the classroom and out of it. Workshops, faculty development programs, faculty resource centers, technical and pedagogical assistance are important pre-requisites. They along with the mandatory usage of technology in different forms and manifestations in teaching and learning goes a long way in creating the mindset, necessary for bringing in the revolution within the campus.

The paper tries to understand the impact of using social media as a tool to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Ibra College of Technology. The recent emphasis on teaching and learning especially student centered learning as per the new strategic plan formed the foundation of the study. The student’s possession of smart phones with internet connections provided the necessary motivation for the study. The pilot study was conducted during the Spring Semester of the academic year 2013-2014 in the Business Studies Department of Ibra College of Technology, Sultanate of Oman. It included higher level students, namely, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor.
Background

Vincent & Shephard (1998) [21] successfully used Internet and the World Wide Web to add new dimensions while teaching politics in the Middle-east. Successful usage of technology especially in carrying out simulations via chat rooms and emails enabled the learner to understand the specifics of Middle-east politics in line with the international environment. The study points towards the effective use of Internet in teaching-learning, which at times act as a hindrance mostly due to cultural issues. Aydin & Eshet-Alkalai (2009) [9] suggested some challenges in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) especially when it comes to technology enabled teaching and learning. A meta-analysis conducted by the authors on the bringing together of ODL technologies suggested that there are several pedagogical, political, cognitive and technological problems. These problems formed barriers in successful implementation of ODL leading to frustration amongst educators, decision-makers and learner. The problems enlisted by the authors were faced by the users while reading effectively from a digital display of text and adjusting to better graphic user interfaces. The learner and instructor were not proficient in effective utilization of ODL platforms. The learner faced issues in hyper textual and non-linear learning environments. The design happens to be the major reason for the ineffective learning while using modern day ODL. Furthermore, ODL cannot provide educated use of pedagogical possibilities and the learner suffers from feelings of loneliness and non-ownership in the absence of an instructor. The complication increases manifold when a learner encounters problems while filtering huge volumes of information available in ODL environs and building coherent bodies of knowledge.

Although most of the issues discussed in this paper are closely related to an ODL set-up, their implication even in a full time program is worth considering, especially when enhancing the quality of teaching-learning in a Middle-east based HEI. Saunders and Quirke (2002) [19] studied two tertiary educational institutes in the UAE that have begun to deliver educational programs through the laptops. The study revealed that cultural, gender, infrastructure, support and faculty related factors need to be considered while planning the introduction of new technology so as to improve the quality of education in a HEI. The study added that while cultural factors might not affect the program greatly, computer-based study is more effective when it is delivered to single-sex classes in the cultural setting prevailing in the Arab world. It is true especially when the students completed their primary and secondary
education in a single-sex environment. State-of-the-art infrastructures, coupled with strong institutional support are the other factors contributing towards a changed teaching-learning environment, not to forget the continuous motivation from trainers/lecturers and academic leaders.

**Objective**

The study tries to understand the impact of using social media as a tool to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in a HEI set-up. The study would also compare student performance on the class assessments with that of their virtual presence and participation providing important pointers towards the contribution of quality enhancement. Furthermore, it adds up the challenges faced by the lecturer-learner, along with proposed intervention for embedding it with other pedagogical techniques.

**Social Media in Teaching-Learning**

Moran, Seaman and Tinti-kane (2011) [17] found that over 95% of the faculties used social media as a teaching or professional tool outside the classroom. Facebook and YouTube were the two mostly preferred social media platforms used, and Facebook scored over YouTube in terms of the posting of content. 30% of the faculties posted contents for the students, for viewing outside the classroom. An additional 40% made it mandatory as part of assessments and other allied activities on the part of the students. It clearly proves that unless social media is used actively as a teaching-learning tool, it cannot be used optimally for the benefit of the lecturers and the students. Social media can easily create a Personal Learning Environment (PLE), even in a full time program. The blended mode with the classroom based face to face learning only adds to the teaching-learning culture developed in a Higher Education Institute. Kitsantas and Dabbagh (2012) [7] proposed PLE promises to be a pedagogical approach for bringing together formal and informal learning using social media. It helps to complement the one existing within an environment by encouraging self-paced or self-regulated learning outside the classroom. In a full time campus based academic program such social media based PLE only adds to the overall learning quotient of the learner. The emergence of web 2.0 technologies including social media has given a new facelift to teaching-learning as the whole process has undergone a makeover in terms of user generated contents, customization of contents suiting the requirement of the individual learner. The micro-content are formed with the help of active online collaboration between the lecturer and the learner. User
centered contents generated by the learner with active collaboration of faculty coordinators provides benefits which may not be possible without the advent of social media and other web 2.0 tools (Alexander 2006) [1]. Content learning has undergone a transition, thereby making the teaching-learning process simple and convenient for the major stakeholders, the learner and the tutor. Web-based learning led to the freely and instantaneously available contents, participation of the learner in a virtual classroom. The usage of popular social networking sites like Facebook led to the increase of lecturer-student engagement by creating educational micro-communities. All these overcome various challenges including ICT literacy and uneven access as was evident in the University of Capetown (Bosch2009) [6]. Al-Mukhaini, E; Al-Qayoudhi, W; Al-Badi, A(2014) [2] explored the motives for the use of social network by the higher education students in Oman and understand whether traditional teaching methods can be altered or not? The survey amongst the Omani students deciphered the impact on traditional styles of teaching which also highlighted the benefits of using social networks as effective teaching and learning tools for the higher education sector.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Ibra College of Technology (ICT) in the Business Studies Department. It considered only one lecturer teaching two of the courses considered in the study. The study involved a group of students with female students forming the majority (82%), 21 to be specific, thereby, putting their male counterparts at a minuscule 18%, numbering 5. The students involved in this study were studying Performance Appraisal and Productivity course while pursuing their Bachelor program in Human Resource specialization in spring 2013-2014 Semester. The second set comprised of students, numbering 22, had completed their Advanced Diploma course in Teamwork Management from the same specialization and the class size comprised of 88%(19 in numbers) females again outnumbering their male counterparts at a paltry 12%(3). The intention of the research was to understand the impact of social media as an important subset of technology based teaching-learning from the perspective of both the courses. The pilot study opted to understand the implication of the implementation of social media in teaching a course for the higher level students, in order to extend it later on to various other levels as well.
The study used the secondary data generated by the dedicated Facebook page, YouTube, Slideshare, Blogs and Micro-blog used by the second author of this paper who is teaching these courses. Comparison of the performance of the students just before the onset of final examinations was done with virtual participation. This included the assessments viz. individual and group activities, in the form of case analysis, report and presentation, mid-term examinations, apart from classroom participation and attendance. The cues provided acted as strong viability indicators for extending the scope of the usage of this tool as quality centered teaching-learning tool across the institution.

**Procedure**

The study began since the onset of the Spring Semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The new mission according to the strategic plan 2013-2018 states ,“To deliver high quality student-centered education that produces competitive graduates who enter the labor market with confidence, strong technological and personal skills, prepared for a life of contribution and success” ICT (2014) [10]. The rejuvenated mission has brought in a revolution by emphasizing on the teaching and learning domain while giving special importance to student centered learning.

The students were encouraged to participate in Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/DrManisPage) [14] without divulging their real names and their personal details such as name, snap, and address. This had increased the level of participation from many of the reluctant students, notably females. The page was used mostly as a platform for doubt clarification, knowledge reinforcement, added learning resources, facilitating assessments and online discussion, capsule on lecture videos, apart from making important announcements. The sharing of additional learning resources, assessments were done with a linkage with the classroom lecture through YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/user/drmanishankar12/videos) [15]. MOODLE was doing the necessary back-up role. Additionally, lecturer’s blogs in blogger and wordress, along with his micro-blog in twitter, accounts in slideshare, behance provided additional tools towards this cause. The major objective of the lecturer was to test this tool in complementing the existing methodologies, apart from understanding the quality related aspects so as to enhance
the overall quality of teaching and learning. The page had strict filters in page with contents going through stages of screening by the administrator (the lecturer). The students being mainly from the countryside, i.e. the Sharqiya governorate of Oman, were more conservative in their approach. This was one of the major hindrances, although continuous encouragement yielded positive results.

**Findings**

An analysis was made between the online and classroom behavior of the students, vis-à-vis their performances in different assessments being conducted throughout the semester. The Facebook and YouTube data analysis revealed the following-

1. 57% female students liked the Facebook page as compared to 43% of their male counterparts. Direct or organic reach of the page for female students was 52% vis-à-vis that of 42% for the males.
2. Facilitator or lecturer’s continuous motivation and reminder in the classroom is a necessity for social media based learning.
3. Initial response of resistance of change is momentary provided continual motivation is provided by the lecturer until the learner gets hands on.
4. Female students who are generally silent in the class owing to the presence of the opposite gender are more vocal and participative in the virtual discussion.
5. Lecture’ videos acted as a valuable supplementary learning resource especially for revision just before the exam.
6. There had been a periodical progress in the female students’ participation on social media, who are generally shy, but came out overcoming the mental and social barrier, through active participation in the teaching-learning process.
7. The topics chosen for discussion should not only initiate a good discussion, but also meander into related ones to encourage wider and better participation.
8. The teacher should initially be the active facilitator with the gradual handing over of the role to the learner, once the handholding phase is over, which unfortunately could not be achieved during the course of the study, being a single semester only.
9. Presence of smart phones and physical infrastructure in the form of WIFI campus, computers and other peripherals does not necessarily lead to learning through social media on its own. Students also cited the open labs not available during free hours and if available most of the time social media was closed owing to wrongful usage.
(9) The social media was activated in the lab only based on the lecturer’s request and the students had to use their smart phones and laptops otherwise.

(10) Active prior presence in the social media is not a pre-requisite for participation in social media or technology based-learning. It is a matter of altering student behavior through continuous motivation.

(11) Social media can act as a good knowledge reinforcement tool, although, the study brought to the fore poor participation of students on issues which are related, but not discussed in the classroom, i.e. additional learning resources.

(12) Regular involvement of the lecturer is a must to draw the students into the forum/discussion to overcome the challenge posed by gender related mental and social barrier.

(13) Applied and analytical questions are better for discussion in this mode rather than direct ones.

(14) There is a need for regular monitoring of the quality of all teaching-learning tools including that of social media and technology based ones.

The Facebook and YouTube details as discussed above is presented in the tables below-

**Table 1- Facebook Data Analysis and Interpretation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Activity</th>
<th>Details of the Activity</th>
<th>Hits and Responses</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 12th 2014</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Knowledge Reinforcement-Questions</td>
<td>1 Likes and 5 Responses, with 3 from the lecturer and 2 from the same learner. Learner consisted of <strong>male</strong>.</td>
<td>Answering the query put forth leading to other issues, therefore discussion is initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 13th 2014</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Knowledge Reinforcement-Questions</td>
<td>No Likes, but 3 Responses, 2 responses from lecturer, 1 from the learner. The</td>
<td>Initiated by the teacher answered by the learner devoid of a discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity Details</td>
<td>Comments/Participants</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15th 2014</td>
<td>Activity 1 - Knowledge Reinforcement - Questions Activity 2 Activity 1 - Knowledge Reinforcement - Questions</td>
<td>4 comments, 2 learners, and 2 lecturers. Learners are <strong>male</strong>. Activity 1 had 4 comments, 2 learners, and 2 lecturers. Learners are <strong>female</strong>. Activity 2 had 8 comments, 4 <strong>female</strong> learners and 4 from the lecturer. One visitor saw the post.</td>
<td>Activity 1 was initiated by the teacher; discussion hovered around the same topic. Activity 2 deviated into allied topics as well, apart from the ones posted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20th 2014</td>
<td>Activity was Knowledge reinforcement - Question</td>
<td>1 like from a <strong>male</strong> participant and a total of 4 comments, with 2 from teachers and 2 from <strong>female</strong> students.</td>
<td>The discussion was on the same topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22nd 2014</td>
<td>Activity 1, Activity 2, Activity 3 and Activity 4</td>
<td>Activity 3 had 2 Likes from <strong>male</strong> students, 22 comments,</td>
<td>Discussion in Activity 3 hovered around the topic and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Likes/Comments</td>
<td>Intracactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24th 2014</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Knowledge Reinforcement - Questions</td>
<td>8 from lecturer, 14 from students, out of which, 8 are female and 6 are male. Activity 1, Activity 2 and Activity 4 didn’t elicit any likes and also did not have any comments.</td>
<td>Also allied ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26th 2014</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>Activity 1 was Knowledge Reinforcement - Question. Activity 2 was knowledge reinforcement</td>
<td>Activity 1 had 13 responses, out of which 4 were from lecturer, 9 from students. 3 were male students.</td>
<td>Highly interactive discussion with topic touching on allied concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>Interaction Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27th 2014</td>
<td>Activity 2 Knowledge Reinforcement-Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 from lecturer and 2 from female students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 28th 2014</td>
<td>Activity 1 News insight for analysis Activity 2 Knowledge Reinforcement-Questions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>A small discussion on the topic posted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29th 2014</td>
<td>Activity 1 had no response and no likes. Activity 2 had 2 responses, with 1 from the lecturer and 1 from a female student.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Interactive topic covering similar and allied topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30th 2014</td>
<td>Activity had 15 comments, with 8 from lecturers and 7 from students. Out of 7 students, 6 were female and</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table describes the activities and interactions related to an initiative, possibly in a social media context. The dates indicate the initiation and continuation of discussions, with specific comments and likes noted for each activity.
January 31st 2014

Activity was Knowledge Reinforcement-Questions

Activity had 1 like, 8 responses. 3 responses were from lecturers and 5 from female students.

Interactive with similar topics apart from the ones posted originally as status.

February 1st 2014

Activity 1 was Knowledge Reinforcement-Questions. Activity 2 was article for analysis.

Activity 1 had 3 comments, with 1 from lecturer and 2 from 2 female students. Activity 2 didn’t elicit any like or response.

Interaction on the topic posted.

February 16th 2014

Activity initiated by student.

3 comments, with 1 comment from lecturer and 2 from female students.

Interaction on the topic posted without deviating into related ones.

Table 2- YouTube Data Analysis and Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Activity</th>
<th>Details of the Activity</th>
<th>Hits and Responses</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 12th 2014</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>1 Likes and 17 engagements.</td>
<td>Positive feedback after the posting of the lecture capsule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 13th 2014</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>0 Likes and 23 engagements.</td>
<td>Engagements increased substantially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Lecture Type</td>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>Engagements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15th 2014</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20th 2014</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 21st 2014</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22nd 2014</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24th 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26th 2014</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27th 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 28th 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29th 2014</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30th 2014</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31st 2014</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classroom Performance Vis-À-Vis Virtual Performance

The observations derived from the table below after comparing the classroom and virtual performances are as follows-

1. Females are generally more active than their male counterparts, although it’s worth mentioning the numbers of the former are much larger than the latter in the overall class size.
2. There are some exceptional cases of online and offline behavior being the same for the learner.
3. The online and offline participation in discussion at times doesn’t prove logical when it comes to the presentation abilities as many of the students are devoid of both being good participators virtually and good presenters in the classroom.
4. Cultural issue being a consideration for girls to speak out does not form a barrier as the ones who are active, are vocal, online and offline. Mental blockade needs to be removed through continuous motivation.
5. Some are unique in terms of their participation as their online presence is more active than the classroom participation, and majority of such cases are female, which is a normal phenomenon under the given cultural background.
6. Presence of smartphones, internet with the students is indirectly proportional to their online behavior, as majority possessing a smart phone, doesn’t participate in online discussion.

The classroom performance versus the online participation along with the analysis and interpretation as explained above is depicted in the table below-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>February 1st 2014</th>
<th>Lecture Capsule</th>
<th>7 likes with 37 engagements</th>
<th>Increasing trend with exams round the corner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 16th 2014</td>
<td>Lecture Capsule</td>
<td>3 likes and 32 engagements</td>
<td>Increasing trend with exams round the corner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3- Comparison of classroom and virtual performance.
Passive, Female | 1 | 8 | Generally a passive student in the class as well.
---|---|---|---
Passive, Female | 2 | 9 | A highly active participant in the class, but reluctant
---|---|---|---
Passive, Male | 2 | 8 | An active class participant with negligible online presence.
---|---|---|---
Passive, Female | 1 | 8.5 | Generally a passive student in the class as well.
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 2 | 8.5 | A balanced participant both online and offline.
---|---|---|---
Active, Male | 1 | 8.5 | Active in the class, but passive online
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 1 | 9.5 | Highly passive in the class, but just the opposite online.
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 2 | 8 | A balanced participant both online and offline.
---|---|---|---
Active, Male | 2 | 8.25 | Highly active in the class, and online.
---|---|---|---
Passive, Male | 2 | 7 | Active in the class, but passive online.
---|---|---|---
Passive, Female | 1 | 8 | Passive in the class as well as online
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 2 | 9 | Active, both in the class and online.
---|---|---|---
Passive, Female | 1 | 7 | Passive in the class as well as online
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 2 | 9 | Active, both in the class and online.
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 2 | 9.5 | Highly active, both in the class and online.
---|---|---|---
Active, Female | 2 | 8 | Highly active, both in the class and online.
### Demography and Participation

The demography vis-à-vis participation of the students along with the inferences drawn are presented below-

1. Week 1 witnessed more passive participants amongst the female students, whereas the males had more of active participants.
2. Week 2 witnessed only marginal improvement in males’ participation (20% increase), while females witnessed more active participation to 11 passive and 10 active participants (38% increase) than week 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active, Male</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>8.5</th>
<th>Highly active, both in the class and online. A rare one amongst male students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive, Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Passive in the class as well as online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive, Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Passive in the class as well as online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active, Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Highly active, both in the class and online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive, Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Passive in the class as well as online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active, Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Highly active, both in the class and online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive, Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Passive in the class as well as online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive, Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Passive in the class as well as online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active, Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Highly active, both in the class and online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active, Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>Highly active, both in the class and online.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A * Gender and virtual behavior, Active if virtual participation is more than two times, passive if participation is less than two times during the course of the study
B** Marks scored in classroom participation (out of two)
C*** Marks scored in classroom presentations (out of three)
(3) Week 3 showed subtle variations in male participants, albeit positively, whereas, females were better placed than their male peers with 21 (100%) active participants.

(4) The last week, showed males giving up, and the females coming down appreciably.

(5) The statistics proves that gender based social barrier can be overcome with continuous motivation on the part of the facilitator.

(6) Social media can serve as a miraculous tool to remove social cum mental barrier of gender, for making the students confident so as to take on the face to face discussion within a classroom.

(7) Learning can be supplemented well with the help of social media based teaching-learning tools, especially applied questions, doubt clarification, value added learning of articles, news items and cases apart from announcing major discussions.

(8) Engagements increased with the passage of time and reached the peak just before the exams.

The explanations above are presented in the table below-

**Table 4- Consolidated Gender wise weekly participation in virtual teaching and learning (Source- data generated and analyzed from Facebook and YouTube)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Common Engagements for both the genders in Social Media*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rating as low, medium and high was done on the basis of the level of participation, comments posted along with the reach of the contents.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The study was intended to understand the importance of Social Media based teaching and learning, and its positioning vis-à-vis other techniques. This led to the transformation in the learning behavior of the learner, impacting the cultural and environmental issues prevailing in the institution. Mehmood & Taswair (2013) [16] investigated pedagogical impact of social
networking sites on the under graduates of Nizwa College of Applied Sciences while using blogs, wikis, tweets RSS feeds. Their study revealed that these tools acted as paradigms contributing towards the building of knowledge societies and also contributed substantially knowledge sharing and general awareness of the student communities as has been the case in this study paper. It also explored the fact that cultural barriers prevent the learner to open up while studying in a co-educational set-up, especially where the mingling of both the genders is not considered socially acceptable. Gender of the students in a co-education set-up forms an important component within the Omani culture and therefore adds another important dimension to this study. In addition to that one should not forget the aspect of continual improvement of the quality in grooming industry oriented graduates in line with the college vision and mission. The transformation of teaching and learning in the Arab World by breaking the barriers through social learning is happening all across the region predominantly with the usage of social media and other ICT tools AMSR (2013). It was evident even in this study although it was done on a pilot basis. The level of participation and classroom behavior transformed for the Omani students pointed out by Al Sereihy & Al Youbi (2011) [3] in their study. They opined that the usage of social networking application was prevalent in the Universities of Saudi Arabia, although applications were limited to Facebook. Furthermore, they also indicated the strong potential these tools have for collaboration although were being under-utilized by the Saudi students. The reason was attributed mainly to privacy and security concerns. These factors were a part even in this study and therefore continuous motivation by the facilitator to remove the barriers and change the mindset played a significant role. Joshi & Hafeez (2014) [13] spoke about the increased usage of social media in the HEI of the Sultanate of Oman especially to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. It was corroborated through the findings of this study; although embedding with the existing pedagogical techniques and measuring the effectiveness had to be chalked out.

**Limitation**

The pilot study was conducted for a limited period of time and covered only two courses, rather than a cross section of the students, representative of all levels, specializations and disciplines. The participation was voluntary, devoid of any incentive in the form of marks, leading to lack of interest in spite of continuous motivation from the facilitator, which could have led to reduced participation. Many of the other social media tools present with the
lecturer weren’t used as it was a pilot study to understand the impact for applying it all across the levels and departments within the institution.

References


Appendix

(1) Facebook page used in the study
(2) YouTube page used in the study
Details of the contributors:

(1) Dr. Azzah Al Maskeri, Acting Dean and Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, almaskari.a@ict.edu.om

(2) Dr. Manishankar Chakraborty, Lecturer-Business Studies, emailmanishankar@gmail.com

(3) Mr. Majid Hilal Amur Al Rashdi, Assistant Quality Assurance Head, Mrashdi@ict.edu.om

(4) Dr. Srinivasan Ramamoorthy, Quality Assurance Head, s.ramamoorthy@ict.edu.om