

Using Social Networking Site (SNS) in Students' Learning Experiences: An Experimental Study at Higher Secondary School Karachi, Pakistan

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Abstract: *The study was aimed to utilize the social networking site "facebook" for enhancing students' learning experiences for a specialized branch of social studies i.e. Pakistan Studies at O' levels. This subject has a vital role to play in developing a student's personality in that befitting manner which caters his/her needs to become a responsible, patriotic and productive citizen of Pakistan. This study was conducted at an O' levels Institution duly registered by British Council named Beacon Askari Secondary and O' Levels School, Kazimabad, Karachi, Pakistan. Two sections of class IX were taken for conducting this research. Section OL IX-A was taught through the conventional teaching methodology whereas OL IX-B was the experimental group. Students of OL IX-B were assigned topics and were told to search related material from internet and present it pictorially while mentioning at least ten points regarding the facts, figures or important events on one side of the picture. At the end of month, a comprehensive test was taken from both the sections. Results revealed that the performance of Snr OL IX-B students was 22% better than Snr OL IX-A. It was also observed that the students of experimental group were good at debatable question hence showing their creative skills development which is the highest level of learning in cognitive domain as per Blooms Taxonomy.*

Keywords: *Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Social Networking Site (SNS), Facebook, Self-Assessment, Pakistan Studies (P.St.), Senior (Snr)*

Introduction

Every Educational system in the world includes a variety of subjects to develop different aspects of the students which make them an effective citizen of the society. All the countries in the world include various subjects of social sciences along with the specialized studies to enhance the students' social skills to become patriotic, well informed of the social and geo-political situations of the country. In Pakistan, Pakistan Studies is a subject that is taught with a perspective of making each student a responsible and patriotic citizen of Pakistan by exploring geography, economics, history, civics and politics. Students are told about the different places,

people, issues, events, facts and figures that shape their lives and allow them to accept and respect the diversified culture, norms and values of different provinces. This also helps the students to learn history of the nation, foreign policies, national and international standings and the relationships with the other countries. The ultimate objective of the course is to develop a spirit of national interest and knowledge of the country which is local and includes its links across the borders. The course requires a very keen interest by the teachers and students simultaneously, to acquire the true essence of its objective.

Information & Communication Technology has been playing a wide and global part in imparting the knowledge throughout the globe. Modern Researches has been very observant to inculcate the ICT in modern methodologies in teaching almost every subject. It has become almost an integral part and the most effective instrument in teaching and bringing a better leaning among the students. The need to incorporate ICT has opened up in the Pakistani educational system as the modern generations gave a very good understanding and their proficiencies are appreciated highly in the use of modern technologies. However, as these technologies are just fresh in Pakistan, Mostly they are being used not effectively and it is an essential feeling among the teachers to motivate and council the students towards using these technologies in the most constructive ways. The inculcation of ICT in Education has been included in many of the subjects and the same was thought to be experimented in teaching Pakistan Studies in Pakistan Environment. Social Networking has spread and many of the students in urban areas are using social networking. In this way it was not very difficult to utilize the medium in bringing in the positive improvement and achieving the major objectives of the course.

This study may be quite useful for the social studies and social sciences teachers as they would better understand the different dimensions and effects of changed instructional strategies and use of modern teaching aids to broaden the thinking patterns of learners.

Statement of Problem

The subjects that are related to social sciences especially the one that covers the historical perspectives, cultural diversities, international relations and geography are always considered to be the toughest subjects to teach as the students' interest do not get developed easily. Teachers usually follow the curriculum of text books which is not found sufficient to inculcate the true spirit of the subject. The main objective of making learners aware of their role in the society and the knowledge of their heroes, the struggle and sacrifices made by the revolutionaries and freedom fighters, the political struggle and then the knowledge of the homeland. The increasing demand of humans as social beings needs to be addressed through proper delivery of this subject which is yet not being done.

When it comes to teaching Pakistan Studies and other subjects related to social sciences it is always considered highly difficult for the teachers to keep the environment if the class effective and interactive. Most of the students take these courses taken for granted as our

educational system allows them to do. The students with the mindset of passing these kind of subjects on the basis of sheer memorization and by writing the long answers to suffice the need of the examiner as it is given very less attention in reading the answers. The situation makes it difficult for positive and effective learning with the negative and alternative ways of thinking towards learning the subject. The students considered the subject irrelevant, outdated and ineffective as this does not come to serve their practical lives. The whole practice adds to a negative feedback as for as the objectives demand.

In addition the methodology of teaching Pakistan Studies is traditional which does not cater the needs of today's generation. It needs modern and innovative styles of teaching by using modern technologies. Students feel encouraged and put more efforts when they are assigned the tasks but in the traditional method the role of the students is passive and they are unable to do the work by themselves which does not support the need of the modern learning. When students are given autonomy they work better and in this way they start getting more confident and the information become knowledge. The use of ICT in teaching Pakistan Studies can bring a drastic change in teaching patterns and learning of the students.

Objective of Study

- (a) To explore the students skills in using ICT and SNS in education.
- (b) To use Interactive teaching in Pakistan Studies to increase the level of Students learning
- (c) To enable the students to keep the information for the longer period of the time by finding and reading themselves instead of memorization
- (d) To provide a platform to the students where they can feel the positive use of the internet and social websites.
- (e) To enable the participation of the students in performing different tasks and increase competitive skills.
- (f) To give teachers an alternative and innovative method in teaching which will help them to make the subject more interesting and the students centered.
- (g) To show the teachers a way to think differently and update them with the modern means of technologies.
- (h) To enable students to bring variation in their teaching stles and learn modern ways of teaching.

Research Questions

Primary Question

- a. What is the impact of using SNS on teaching learning process in Pakistan Studies?

Secondary Questions

- (a) How can we use Social Websites to increase the students individual learning skills?
- (b) How can Pakistan Studies be taught differently to increase the interest of the students toward the subject?
- (c) How can teachers use innovative and modern methods in teaching?

Literature Review

With the emergence of new technologies world has become a global village where we can get connected to anyone across the globe within seconds. This advancement helps us to take advantage of the researches being conducted for the betterment of imparting quality education to the students. Learners have two important places where they get the skills developed by using the latest technology. According to Kent and Facer (2004) the first environment where student uses the technology in a wide range is the school whereas at home, learner's engagement with the computer activities gets narrower. ICT is now being applied broadly in educational field and it helps the Instructor to deliver the lectures more effectively and interactively as use of ICT has been proved to be a powerful tool for educational reform. The research of Lowther, et al. (2008), Weert and Tatnall (2005) on ICT also proved that use of ICT raises the standard of education and develops a relation between the theory and its practical implementation thus creating real life situations for understanding various phenomenon that becomes quite hard for the learner to understand without ICT.

As learners get actively involved in ICT classrooms, the learning process gets quicker and it becomes easy for the teacher to develop students' decision making and reasoning skills (Lu, Hou & Huang 2010). Castro Sánchez and Alemán (2011) indicated that ICT has transformed the teaching centered environment to student centered one. It provides more educational possibilities and affordances for both the teacher and the student. Brush, Glazewski and Hew (2008) declared ICT as an important tool for learners to explore new learning topics, discover new ideas, solve issues and find solutions to resolve the same in the learning process. ICT assists self-directed and student-centered learning. Castro Sánchez and Alemán (2011) find that with the use of ICT, students get engage in meaningful use of technology through accessing the required information, short listing the material and then organizing it as per the assignment needs. The use of ICT is helpful in making learners creative and critical assessors of the learning material (Chai, Koh & Tsai 2010). Levin and Wadmany (2006) also emphasized on the constructive learning approach and declared that ICT develops higher level concepts. The statistics of the research conducted by McMahan's (2009) also proves a significant positive correlation between the use of ICT and acquiring critical thinking skills. Reid (2002) indicates that ICT allows students to spend more time to explore their world beyond the boundaries of course content to better understand the concepts. Watts-Taffe et al. (2003) declares teachers as catalysts for integration of technology through use of ICT.

21st Century skills refer to the core competencies of individuals such as collaboration, critical thinking, digital literacy and problem solving that allow pupils to explore their own world with different perspectives (Sheldon 2008). Facebook, which is now known as the largest social networking site in Pakistan, was created by a student, Mark Zuckerberg of Harvard University and it was used to link students socially (Urista, Dong, and Day 2009).

For promoting social interaction, Facebook is the best social networking site for students among all other SNS in almost all the colleges and universities. The significant growing number of facebook users has made the researchers to study its impact and implications on teaching learning process (Alhazmi & Rahman 2013).

Social networking websites are referred as significant tools which can be used to facilitate education by teachers and students (Jones et al. 2010). Researches prove that that using Facebook increases not only life satisfaction but also students' social confidence (Valenzuela, Park & Kee2009).

Tufekci (2008) also carried out research on SNS and stated that Web 2.0 and Facebook are educational tools that need to be used for educational purposes. Now-a-days, pupils use the SNS to read blogs, share things and send e-mails. Jones and friends (2010) also agrees with the statement that stated that social networking websites can be effective tools which can be used by teachers and learners to enrich education.

While talking about minimizing communication gap between students and teachers, Bicen, Ozdamli and Uzunboylu (2012) state that SNS can promote communication between the teachers and learners and give an easy access to different subject materials, and help to view the announcements in a much easier way. They also advised that sharing learning materials on social networking sites can promote learning. The study of Ajjan and Hartshone's (2008) also reveal that when Social networking sites are used for educational purposes, it stimulates communication between pupils and the interest they show in their lessons.

Considering the great impact of SNS, the teaching staff can create virtual environment by using Social networking websites (Madge et. al. 2009). To develop positive relationship between students or individuals of same age group and common interest, learning together increases their motivation (West et. al. 2009). Students learn better when they are socially connected with their peers and this behavior is used by many teachers through use of Facebook in education (Kabilan et. al. 2010). Social networking websites develop positive attitude in teachers when an organized and qualified learning environment is provided (Pasek & Hargittai 2009). ICT is playing its role in every field and in education Social Networking Sites are the best sources to achieve the learning outcomes (Kirschner & Karpinski 2010). This environment supports communication and improves students' social and cognitive skills (Christofides et al. 2009). Ross et. al. (2009) says that SNS advances critical thinking skills. IT skills are mandatory for students to learn to make the best use of worldwide available resource unit (Lampe et. al. 2008). ICT improves communication between teachers and students Joinson (2008).

Undoubtedly, SNS is one of the most effective tools that enhance multiple skills in the students which are required for his all-round personality development. If it is supervised properly and students are taught its right usage, many of the social issues can be addressed and students understanding level can also be raised through introducing this tool in everyday teaching.

Hypothesis

Social Networking Sites (SNS) can play a significant role to enhance students' learning and better understanding of Pakistan Studies at Secondary Level.

Methodology

The research was conducted in an O' Levels school duly registered by British Council named Beacon Askari Secondary and O' Levels School, Kazimabad, Karachi, Pakistan.

This research follows an experimental design in which two sections of O-Level (OL) IX were taken. As both the sections had approximately the same background, pretest was not required and only one test was conducted at the end of one month experimental methodology. Section OL IX A was taught through the conventional method whereas OL IX B got the learning through use of SNS and self-assessment technique. The experimental group's performance was compared with the controlled group's performance after a month's time and based on the data obtained through their 2 hours test, impact of SNS and Self-assessment technique were analyzed.

Data Analysis

The two sections of OL IX were given the same topics to be covered by two subject experts of Pakistan Studies. The first section, OL IX A which was the controlled group received the lectures through the traditional methods and they had appeared in exams on March 31, 2014. This test was of 50 marks and 27 students appeared in this test. The marks obtained by the students are shown in Table 1. The average score of the class was 31 and students obtained marks in the range from 22 to 41 out of 50. The average percentage of the class was found 63% with mode at 32 marks.

Table 1

Result of OL IX A

Roll No.	OL IX-A
1	32
2	29
3	32
4	36
5	25
6	26

7	36
8	40
9	25
10	31
11	40
12	24
13	33
14	40
15	40
16	41
17	32
18	24
19	27
20	0
21	30
22	29
23	32
24	36
25	22
26	27
27	28
28	33
Total	850
Mean	31
Median	32
Mode	32
Avg Percentage	63

Analysis of OL IX B Results (Experimental Group)

The same test of 50 marks was given to the students of OL IX B on March 31, 2014. The duration of test was two hours and 27 students from this class appeared in this test. The marks obtained by the students are shown in Table 2. The mean score of the class was 42 and students obtained marks in the range from 36 to 47 out of 50. The average percentage of the class was found 85% with mode at 47 marks.

Table 2

Result of OL IX B (Experimental Group)

Roll No.	OL IX-B
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1	38
2	42
3	36
4	47
5	47
6	42
7	39
8	0
9	46
10	41
11	39
12	36
13	42
14	46
15	41
16	44
17	47
18	43
19	39
20	40
21	38
22	46
23	41
24	47
25	45
26	40
27	44
28	46
Total	1142
Mean	42
Median	42
Mode	47
Avg Percentage	85

4.4 Comparative Analysis of OL IX A and OL IX B Results:

When the results of both the sections were compared, it was found that the students of OL IX-A scored an average of 31 marks whereas the mean score of OL IX-B was 42. Section OL IX B, the experimental group was found 22% better than that of OL IX-A which proved

facebook to be an effective tool in teaching Pakistan studies at secondary level. Another important aspect of this research was the value of Mode which is estimated to be 32 for OL IX A and 47 for OL IX B showing an improved result of OL IX B students by 15 %. The value of Median also showed 10% improved outcomes of OL IX B students. A significant difference was also found in the range that was 22 to 41 for the controlled group and 36 to 47 for the experimental group. The positive increased values of the experimental group shows that the use of ICT can be beneficial for making the lectures interactive and interesting for students which maximizes pupil's learning. The comparative results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3**Analysis of Result of OL IX A with OL IX B**

Roll No.	OL IX-A	OL IX-B
1	32	38
2	29	42
3	32	36
4	36	47
5	25	47
6	26	42
7	36	39
8	40	0
9	25	46
10	31	41
11	40	39
12	24	36
13	33	42
14	40	46
15	40	41
16	41	44
17	32	47
18	24	43
19	27	39
20	0	40
21	30	38
22	29	46
23	32	41
24	36	47
25	22	45
26	27	40
27	28	44

28	33	46
Total	850	1142
Mean	31	42
Median	32	42
Mode	32	47
Avg Percentage	63	85
Difference in Percentage	22	

Table 4

SPSS Analysis

Conclusion

After critically analyzing the statistical data, we can conclude that:-

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 OL1A	31.4815	27	5.65257	1.08784
OL1B	42.2963	27	3.51715	.67688

Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 OL1A & OL1B	27	.105	.603

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	OL1A - OL1B	-10.81481	6.33693	1.21954	-13.32162	-8.30801	-8.868	26	.000

- a. Social Networking Sites (SNS) is an effective tool in teaching Social Studies at secondary level.
- b. ICT plays a significant role in improving pedagogy and developing students' interest in the lecture.
- c. As, O' Levels students have an international curriculum set by British Council, they found this method quite useful and thought-provoking.
- d. SNS which is usually considered as a time wasting activity can be made useful through its proper use in education.

- e. ICT develops creativity in students as it offers different dimensions and unlimited resources towards a single topic.
- f. Another important aspect of this research was self-assessment. As the students of OL IX B had to evaluate their performance and endorse comments on their assignment, they were better aware of all the negative arrears which lead to marks deduction and this awareness proved to be useful in making students conscious while attempting their final paper and eliminating all the stuff that led them to score less in their classroom assignment.

Recommendations

On the basis of analysis of data and conclusions, it may be recommended that;

- a. Teachers must use different teaching methodologies to impart their lectures.
- b. Teachers should be trained to use ICT in effective manner.
- c. ICT facilities should be made available and its access should be given to students in controlled environment.
- d. Self-Assessment techniques should be taught to students for better results.
- e. ICT should be made compulsory for every teacher to make the students able to solve the question papers designed by British Council.
- f. Future research on this topic is suggested and specific recommendations to improve these limitations including a long treatment time, a large number of classes and teachers, and providing student sufficient of explicit instruction in reading comprehension.

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