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Topic of Research: Pre-service Teachers' Use of Social Networking Sites : An Interface between Knowledge and Pedagogy

Findings

The findings of the present study indicate that using Social Networking Sites (SNSs) was an integral part of daily routine of pre-service teachers. Majority pre-service teachers were prolifically using various features of SNSs. As observed from the results of the study Social Networking Sites provided opportunities for both social interaction and networking, thus they were serving as the right place for creating, sharing and acquiring new knowledge.

Results indicated that pre-service teachers used Social Networking Sites for acquiring factual, conceptual, procedural, and technological knowledge related to their teaching subject as well as B.Ed. course. About 76.77% of respondents agreed that they find SNSs useful in acquiring factual knowledge. The majority of pre-service teachers agreed that their use of SNSs was helpful for them in gaining knowledge about the latest facts, terminologies, and specific elements of their teaching subject. About 84.98 % of respondents agreed that they find SNSs useful in acquiring conceptual knowledge. Pre-service teachers found SNSs equally useful for developing and clarifying concepts of both their teaching subjects as well as the concepts from their B.Ed. course curriculum. The majority (80.43%) of respondents agreed that they find SNSs useful in acquiring procedural knowledge. The highest majority of pre-service teachers learned about various ways of presenting concepts and also about application of theories of teaching subjects from the content available on the SNSs. The majority (80.50%) of respondents agreed that they find SNSs useful in acquiring technological knowledge. Maximum respondents agreed that their SNS use had made it easier for them to use other online platforms and applications. Most of the pre-service teachers agreed that their SNS use improved their overall understanding of online or virtual platforms, providing them confidence to use other online teaching tools as well.

Pre-service teachers had positive perceptions with respect to use of SNSs in pedagogy. They agreed that use of SNSs can be helpful in almost all dimensions of pedagogy i.e. from planning curriculum, understanding classroom context, establishing learning environment, understanding prior knowledge, executing teaching methods, presentation of content, interaction, classroom management, addressing individual differences, student support, evaluation, to remedial work.

Discussions with pre-service teachers revealed that knowledge acquired from Social Networking Sites was also transitioning to their pedagogical practices.

Informal learning through the resources available via SNSs was found supplementing formal education.

The engagement of pre-service teachers on social networking platform shows the need for exchange of knowledge amongst future educators. It also suggests the need for use of social networking technologies for educational purposes. The use of knowledge acquired from SNSs in classroom was an indicator of pre-service teachers' positive attitude towards technology and their readiness to use technology while teaching. The results highlight the significance of digital skills which appear necessary to acquire and share knowledge in a networked world. The lack of formal guidance in this regards suggests a need to build an infrastructure that enable pre-service teachers to effectively and ethically gauge the potential of social networking platforms in education.

