# Potential of Facebook in Teacher Education: A Comparative Study of Student Teachers and Teacher Educators

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## Abstract

Social network sites such as Facebook provide several possibilities for socialization of individuals, ability to communicate with people living worldwide, ability to be a member of group which cannot be possible in real life due to geographical and physical constraints, self-expression and ability to receive information and share it. As the present paper is focused on teacher education, the curricular areas of initial teacher education is recommended in NCTE (2009) is to develop habits and the capacity for self-directed learning, have time to think, reflect, assimilate and articulate new ideas; be self-critical and to work collaboratively in groups (p.24). All of the above abilities can be developed by social network sites, with integrating it in teacher education. In response to these concerns, this study has chosen to focus on the student teachers' and teacher educators' perception regarding potential of Facebook in educationwith the dimensions of Facebook as communication and collaboration tool in education, its positive roles in teacher education program and potential use in classroom settings. The studyconsist 70 student teachers and 30 teacher educators from B.Ed institutions located in Delhi who responded to a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The result reveals that student teachers and teacher educators both are positivity agreed with the statements related to the potential of Facebook in teacher education. Student teachers responded that Facebook can be used to easily share campus events, news, classroom updates, presentations, photos and other information, and can promote effective teacher-student relationship. On the other hand, teacher educators found that Facebook can be used to facilitate study in academic groups and it can be used as to share classroom updates, presentations, photos.

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenal growth of educational technology has attracted extensive population from all around the world. Among these emerging technologies, social network sites are the most popular with billions of its users in all over the world. Gunawardena et al (2009) define social network as the practice of expanding knowledge by making connections with individuals of similar interests. In the Web 2.0 environment, social network is linked to technological services and software that make it possible for people to communicate with others from anywhere, at any time. Social network sites are online spaces that can be customized to a large extent by their users, providing space for personal profiles which users complete in order to make connections with others. Social network sites such as Facebook provide several possibilities for socialization of individuals, ability to communicate with people living worldwide, ability to be a member of group which cannot be possible in real life due to geographical and physical constraints, self-expression and ability to receive information and share it. Utilizing Facebook effectively in teacher education courses will help facilitate perspective teachers to model what they have learned in their own classrooms. Teacher education students will not only benefit by the classroom advantages of using Facebook, but also by learning professional Facebook etiquette (Munoz & Towner, 2009, p.5 & 6).Social networking tools and applications can be used to facilitate the teaching and learning process which includes collaborative, communicative, documentative, generative and interactive tools. It is being used to keep up to date and in touch with existing friends and relations, or to create new relationships.

In India, there are various policies and reports which emphasize on better school education through training of teachers towards the path of ICT. Flexibility, professional development, academic support, universal access, participatory forums, communities, interest groups, keep teachers in touch, self-directed learning, reflective learning, articulate new ideas, being self-critical and work collaboratively, all are the abilities recommended for a ICT enabled and trained teachers in India. The curricular areas of initial teacher education is recommended in NCTE (2009) as to develop habits and the capacity for self-directed learning, have time to think, reflect, assimilate and articulate new ideas; be self-critical and to work collaboratively in groups (p.24). With the millions and millions of users on Facebook, its popularity among college-age students is undeniable, but the potential for this technology to positively impact student and teacher learning remains in question. In response to these concerns, this study has chosen to focus on the student teachers' and teacher educators' perception regarding potential of Facebook in education with the dimensions of Facebook as communication and collaboration tool in education, its positive roles in teacher education program and potential use in classroom settings.

## 2.  Research Methodology

### 2.1 Population & Sample

In the present study, Population consisted all the student teachers and teacher educators of pre-service teacher education. For the purpose of the study, sample of six B.Ed college/institutions from three universities are selected conveniently i.e. JamiaMilliaIslamia, Delhi University, & Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University that are the universities in Delhi that are offering B.Ed course. On the basis of having facebook account, the researcher purposively requested the sample for filling up the questionnaire, those who have profile on Facebook. From the entire received questionnaires, only 70 and 30 completed questionnaires by student teachers and teacher educators are respectively considered for the study.

### 1.2 Tools & Techniques

A questionnaire is developed by the researcher and verified by the educational technology experts, in which the items is adapted from the different researches as Ophus&Abbitt (2009); Roblyer et.al. (2010); Wolfe (2006); Tiryakioglu& Erzurum (2011). The adequate number of questionnaire was distributed among purposively selected sample of student teachers and teacher educators, who had profile on Facebook account.

### 1.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data is analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively as the questionnaire consisted both open and close ended items. Qualitative analysis is done by implying statistical measures like mean and standard deviation. In the open ended items, the entire feedback data from the student teachers and teacher educators has been arranged in tabular form through content analysis and the responses have been categorized in different coding categories.

## 3.  Findinds & Discussion

### 3.1 Potential of Facebook as communication and collaboration in education

On average, as shown in Table 1, student teachers and teacher educators both are positivity agreed with the statements related to the potential of facebook as communication and collaboration in education. It is interesting to find that teacher educators are more positive as compared to student teachers in such statements. Student teachers and teacher educators are mostly agreed that they can communicate with more people in short time through Facebook, it can improve communication among students in a course, and they can use Facebook tools. (postings, discussion topics, media sharing etc.) for collaboration with which students are already familiar.

**Table 1**: Potential of Facebook as communication and collaboration in education

| | Student teachers | | Teacher educators | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication and Collaboration** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| I can communicate with more people in short time through Facebook | 3.97 | 1.021 | 4.33 | 0.661 |
| I think Facebook can improve communication among students in a course | 3.94 | 0.849 | 4.13 | 0.730 |
| We can use Facebook tools (postings, discussion topics, media sharing etc.) for collaboration with which students are already familiar | 3.89 | 0.910 | 4.07 | 0.785 |
| I think Facebook can be used to help students collaborate in teacher education courses | 3.87 | 0.900 | 4.00 | 0.788 |
| I think Facebook can improve communication between students and instructors | 3.74 | 1.163 | 3.70 | 0.877 |
| Communicating via postings, discussion topics and media sharing on Facebook can be easily adapted for academic purposes | 3.33 | 1.248 | 3.63 | 1.066 |

## 3.2 Positive roles of Facebook in teacher-education program

As shown in Table 2 and Fig. 1, student teachers and teacher educators are responded regarding positive roles of Facebook in teacher-education program. More than half of the student teachers with 58.5% and 57.1% responded that it can be used to easily share campus events, news and other information, and can promote effective teacher-student relationship respectively. On the other hand, 66.7% teacher educators reported that Facebook can be used to facilitate study in academic groups, while 40% of them reported that it can promote effective teacher-student relationship.

**Table 2**: Positive roles of Facebook in teacher-education program.

| | Student teachers (%) | Teacher educators (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Easily share campus events, news and other information | 58.5 | 33.4 |
| Effective teacher-student relationship | 57.1 | 40 |
| Study in academic groups | 44.2 | 66.7 |
| Use as an educational tool | 37.1 | 6.7 |
| Interesting and enjoyable learning | 30.0 | 23.3 |

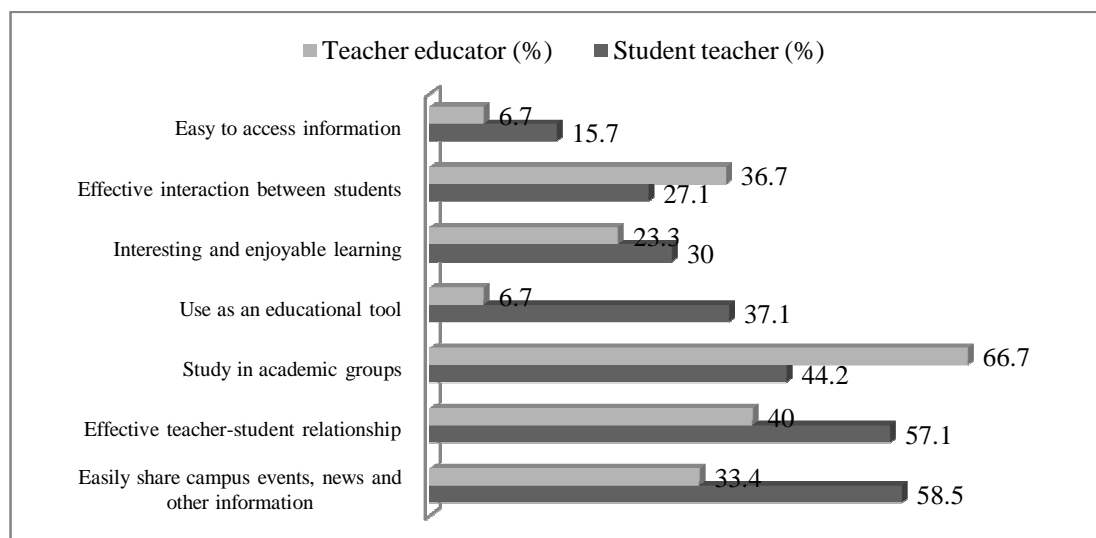| Effective interaction between students | 27.1 | 36.7 |
|---|---|---|
| Easy to access information | 15.7 | 6.7 |



**Figure 1:** Student teachers' and Teacher educators' perception regarding positive roles of Facebook in teacher-education program.

### 3.3 Potential use of Facebook in classroom settings

Student teachers and teacher educators are responded regarding potential use of Facebook in classroom settings which is presented through Table 3 and Fig 2. More than half of the student teachers with 57.1% and 54.2% responded that it can be used as to share classroom updates, presentations, photos, and other information, and interaction between students and teachers respectively. The least potential use of Facebook is that, it depends on teacher strategy as reported by only 5.7% student teachers. On the other hand, almost half of the teacher educators (46.7%) responded that there is no need to use Facebook in classroom settings, while 40% of them responded that it can be used as to share classroom updates, presentations & photos. The least potential use of Facebook is that it can help to access information about class in short time as reported by only 13.4 teacher educators.

**Table 3**: Potential use of Facebook in classroom settings.

|  | Student teachers (%) | Teacher educators (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Share classroom updates, presentations, photos, and other information | 57.1 | 40 |

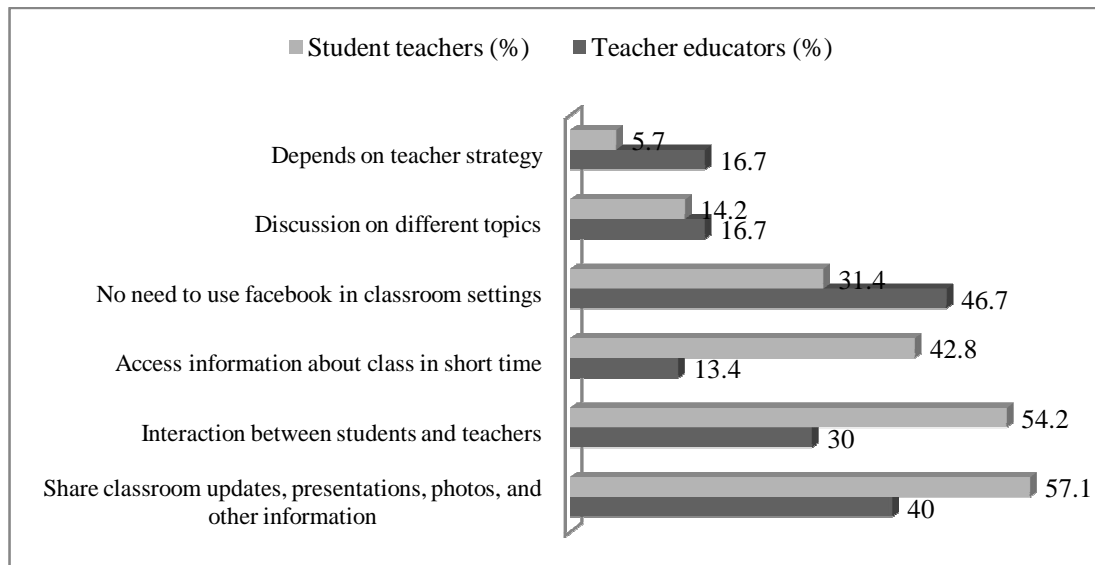| Interaction between students and teachers | 54.2 | 30 |
|---|---|---|
| Access information about class in short time | 42.8 | 13.4 |
| No need to use facebook in classroom settings | 31.4 | 46.7 |
| Discussion on different topics | 14.2 | 16.7 |
| Depends on teacher strategy | 5.7 | 16.7 |



**Figure 1:** Student teachers' and Teacher educators' perception regarding potential use of Facebook in classroom settings.

## 4.  Conclusion

Social networking sites are becoming more involved in our daily life day by day. As of today, instructors or stakeholders can neither conduct a course completely through Facebook nor they can ignore this development comfortably. So, on the basis of the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that there should be capacity building and training programs in teacher education so that the popularity and potential of social network site could be utilized productively by making it a powerful cognitive tool if adapted for academic pursuits and career goals. For example, colleges and universities could take advantage of the new ways that students are communicating with one another. Websites could be established where student teachers could interact on an academically-focused network site, with student teachers posting on walls and teacher educators joining in on these discussions. Social network sites can be integrated in pre-service teacher training successfully as optional subject (so as not to disadvantage

students who are not members of these social network sites) but can also be integrated as compulsory subject.

The successful use of social network sites for class depends to a large extent on the personal commitment of the faculty members, and this may require quite some time investment, depended on the way in which these sites are used. Teacher educators in particular need to develop strategies to make optimal use of the potential in education. Due to time restriction during the teaching practice session of pre-service teacher education courses, social network sites should be used to share and follow each other's experiences and get solutions of their problems related to teaching practice by classmates and teacher education. In addition, alumnae could visit these sites to help current student teachers find appropriate internships, job placements, and information about postgraduate academic and job experiences. These kinds of experiences might be engaging for student teachers and open new ways of academically-oriented interactions where teacher educators and alumnae could discover more about the student teachers' interests, and student teachers, in turn, might express and develop more intellectual facets of their lives.

In the present study, the attempt has been made to study student teachers' and teacher educators' potential of Facebook use in teacher education, but the researcher, after completion of this study, had felt the field of research that have been chosen is extremely vast and there remains a great deal in the area to be explored.The social network sites in education is an emerging and fresh area which is unexplored in India. This area of research is very fertile in nature and has a lot of scope to be probed.

Overall, the implications of social network sites for education, in particular teacher education courses, can only be good, as student teachers and teacher educators stand a better chance of interacting with peers/colleagues, teachers/students, and content as well. The positive point is that it allows not merely the observational media, but the interactive media also.

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