The academic use of Facebook™ to enhance affective learning of open distance learning teacher-students in the Eastern Cape

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Leon and our children Elzette and Stéfan for their love, encouragement and constant support throughout the months that I have spent with this research. Thank you for walking the road with me.

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I wish to thank everyone who has contributed in any way to the development of my academic career. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the following people and organisations for the part which each of them played in making it possible for me to complete this dissertation:

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Abstract

Challenges in the South African education system arise from *inter alia* inadequate training, social and environmental problems, parental inefficiency, insufficient professionalism among teachers, as well as negative attitudes of learners. An urgent need exists to establish "a moral underground, an army of volunteers" (Jansen, 2012) who would be willing to provide another chance to "abandoned children" in poorer schools to develop their full potential for a brighter future. To assist learners to achieve a better future, this study focused on teacher-students and to enhance their learning experiences and consequently their teaching performance. By motivating the teacher-students to develop their potential in order to achieve better, they could, in turn, break the barriers of mediocrity in the learners they taught. The aim of this study was to uncover how a social network service (SNS) like Facebook could be used as an academic tool to support and enhance the affective learning experience of open distance teacher-students in the rural Eastern Cape. The main research question which guided this study was: *How can the affective learning of open distance learning teacher-students in the rural Eastern Cape be supported through academic Facebook?* The research intervention which elicited data, comprised coaching and scaffolding of the learning content relating to research methodology, as well as guiding the participants to engage with an SNS as a learning technology in an academic environment. The researcher created a support group on Facebook where participants could, at any time, interact with peers and the facilitator. Non-probability purposive sampling selected the participants according to the following criteria: isiXhosa home language speaking teacher-students from the rural areas around Queenstown in the Eastern Cape, enrolled with NWU for a BEd Honours degree, and who owned cellular phones which could connect to the Internet. While 74 teacher-students were invited to participate in the research, only 34 attended some of the coaching and scaffolding sessions, and 22 joined the FaceFunda group page. This qualitative bounded case study was conducted from a postmodern pragmatic view. Data were collected through individual interviews, a focus group interview, text from the FaceFunda group page and the researcher's reflective diary. The data were analysed with Atlas.ti™. Three patterns emerged which described participants' affective experiences: (i) emotions while learning with technology, (ii) experiences with technology, and (iii) need for support. In each case, the patterns related to emotions of competence (codes that captured positive and enabling experiences), and emotions of incompetence (codes that captured negative and incapacitating experiences). A secondary analysis of the findings uncovered the guidelines for the academic use of Facebook for rural distance teacher-students. Four themes emerged as guidelines: i) coaching and scaffolding support, (ii) technological support, (iii) peer support, and (iv) communication with the higher education institution. The guidelines highlighted that the affective learning of open distance learning of rural teacher-students in the Eastern Cape can be supported through the academic use of Facebook. ODL teacher-students require support coaching and scaffolding in order to adopt the use of SNSs for academic purposes. Adult learners should be supported to overcome technophobia to enable engagement with learning content. With adequate supportive measures, SNSs can contribute towards positive learning experiences of rural students.

Keywords: Affective domain/learning; coaching and scaffolding; constructivism; facilitated support; guidelines; open distance learning; peer tutoring; rural students; social network sites (SNS); technology-enhanced learning (TEL).

Opsomming

Verskillende faktore gee aanleiding tot die uitdagings in die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwyssisteem. Hierdie faktore sluit onder andere onvoldoende opleiding, sosiale- en omgewingsprobleme, oneffektiewe ouerskap, onvoldoende professionalisme by onderwysers, asook negatiewe houdings by leerders in. ‘n Behoefte bestaan dat onderwysers hul leerders in benadeelde skole sal bystaan om hul potensiaal optimaal te ontwikkel om ‘n beter toekoms vir diesulke leerders te verseker. Derhalwe het hierdie studie gefokus daarop om die leerervarings van in-diens afstandsonderwyser-studente aan die Noordwes-Universiteit te verryk, sodat hulle weer op hul beurt aangespoor kon word om hul onderrig-leerpraktyke te verryk. Die doel van hierdie studie was om te ontdek hoe sosiale netwerksisteme (SNS) soos Facebook in ‘n akademiese omgewing gebruik kan word om die affektiewe leerervarings van plattelandse onderwyser-studente in die Oos-Kaap te ondersteun en hulle oopafstandsonderrigomgewing te verryk. Die navorsingsvraag wat hierdie studie begrond het, was: *Hoe kan die affektiewe leer van oop afstandsleer onderwyser-studente in die Oos-Kaapse platteland ondersteun word deur die akademiese gebruik van Facebook?* Die navorsingsintervensie, waartydens navorsingsdata ingesamel is, het bestaan uit begeleiding en ondersteuning waartydens navorsingsmetodologie as leerinhoud gefasiliteer is, en die deelnemers met kennis en vaardighede rakende die gebruik van SNS binne ‘n akademiese konteks toe te rus. Die navorser het ‘n geslote Facebook-groep, *FaceFunda*, geskep waarop deelnemers te eniger tyd met mekaar en die fasiliteerders kon kommunikeer. ‘n Doelmatige steekproef het navorsingdeelnemers volgens doelmatige kriteria gekies: isiXhosahuistaalsprekend, oopafstandonderwysstudente aan die NWU ingeskryf vir die BEd Honneurs, afkomstig vanuit die plattelandse omgewing van Queenstown in die Oos-Kaap; en beskik oor slimfone met Internetverbinding. Die navorser het 74 onderwyserstudente genooi om aan die navorsingintervensie deel te neem. Van hulle het 34 die begeleiding en ondersteuning bygewoon; en 22 het op FaceFunda geregistreer. ‘n Gebonde gevallestudie vanuit ‘n postmodernistiese standpunt is volgens kwalitatiewe metodologie uitgevoer. Individuele onderhoude met deelnemers, ‘n fokusgroeponderhoud, teks van FaceFunda en die navorser se reflekterende dagboek het die datastel uitgemaak. Die geïntegreerde datastel is met behulp van Atlas.ti™ geanaliseer. Drie patrone is met betrekking tot die deelnemers se affektiewe gewaarwordinge geïdentifiseer: (i) emosies ervaar tydens leer met tegnologie, (ii) ondervindinge met tegnologie, en (iii) behoefte aan ondersteuning. Elke patroon het temas van emosionele bevoegdheid en onbevoegdheid onderskei. ‘n Sekondêre analise ten aansien die kwalitatiewe navorsingsbevindinge het riglyne met betrekking tot die akademiese gebruik van Facebook vir plattelandse oop afstandsleeronderwyserstudente uitgelig. Die vier temas was: (i) begeleiding en ondersteuning, (ii) tegnologie-ondersteuning, (iii) portuurondersteuning, en (iv) kommunikasie met die hoër-onderwysinstelling. Die studie maak die gevolgtrekking dat die affektiewe leer van oopafstandsleer van plattelandse onderwyserstudente in die Oos-Kaap ondersteun kan word deur die akademiese gebruik van Facebook. Oopafstandsleerstudente benodig begeleiding en ondersteuning om sosiale netwerke te kan gebruik en toe te pas op hulle akademiese interaksies. Volwasse studente behoort ondersteun te word om hul vrese en onbekwaamheid ten opsigte van tegnologie vir akademiese

doeleindes, te bowe te kom, sodat hulle doelgerig interaktief met leerinhoud kan omgaan. Met toegewyde begeleiding en ondersteuning kan sosiale netwerke bydra tot positiewe leerervarings van plattelandse onderwyserstudente.

Sleutelwoorde: Affektiewe domein; begeleiding en ondersteuning; konstruktivisme; gefasiliteerde ondersteuning; riglyne; oopafstandsleer; portuurleer; plattelandse studente; sosiale netwerksisteme (SNS); tegnologie-ondersteunde leer.

Solemn Declaration

Certificate of Proofreading

H C Sieberhagen	*Translator and Editor*
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CERTIFICATE ISSUED ON 10 OCTOBER 2013

I hereby declare that I have linguistically edited the dissertation submitted by Mrs Maria Petronella Bester for the MEd degree.

The affective learning of open distance learning teacher-students in the rural Eastern Cape to be supported through academic Facebook™



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Ethics Approval

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The addenda are available on the DVD at the back of the dissertation.

List of Acronyms

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANA	Annual National Assessment
BASE	Bureau for applied social expertise
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CAQDAS	Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software
CCM	Constant Comparative Method
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DE	Distance Education
FOER	Foundation for Educational Research
ICT	Integrated Computer Technologies
ISI Web of Science	International Science Institute Web of Science
IT	Information Technology
MS Word	Microsoft Word
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
NWU	North West University
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
ODL	Open Distance Learning
OLG	Open Learning Group
RSPR	Research Project
SMS	Short Message Signal
SNS	Social Networking Site
TELHE	Technology Enhanced Learning for Higher Education
TELKOM	Telephone Communication Network
TPAK	Technological pedagogical content knowledge
UODL	Unit of Open and Distance Learning
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development