

**An Examination of Which Implications New Media Platforms Can Have on Study Group Work and Learning Opportunities in the Environment of the Course
Information Systems for Business.**

*A Case Study of New Media Platforms in a Collaboration and Learning Environment at
University Level*

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Abstract

The Information Society is characterised by its technological development; the many New Media platforms offered on the World Wide Web have changed the communication culture from a traditional one-way transaction to a co-creation culture (Mangold and Faulds 2009). This paper investigates which implications New Media platforms – with special emphasis on Blackboard, Facebook, Google Docs and Dropbox – have on study group work in the environment of the course Information Systems for Business (ISB) at Aarhus University. Additionally, it is investigated which opportunities these platforms potentially could have on the learning environment at the university, as this could be of significant importance in the future educational system. The research is based on literature about New Media and New Media's role in collaboration and learning environments. In order to establish some empirical grounding for our analysis, three focus group interviews were conducted during February 2014 at Aarhus University among first semester Marketing and Management Communication students who had participated in the ISB course. Based on the findings it is evident that the use of New Media platforms is widely used to facilitate study group work in the course. Most students were positive towards the use of these platforms and found that their group work had become more effective as a direct result. However, some limitations were also found in using New Media platforms in all aspects of the ISB course, as some of the more practical assignments were easier to solve at physical group meetings. Furthermore, these platforms opened up for more social distraction at times.

Key words: New Media Platforms, Facebook, Blackboard, Google Docs, Dropbox, Aarhus University, Business and Social Science, Learning, Collaboration, Students.

1. Introduction

During the last decade there have been several major technological developments; New Media platforms are just one small part of this movement, however, they have had a large influence on how people interact and communicate with one another (Mangolds and Faulds 2009). Online communities, wikis and cloud storage, just to mention a few, have diminished the limitations of time and space in communication (Stevenson 1995). The presence of New Media platforms in our communication is thus today considered unavoidable, as it has become an integrated part of our everyday lives.

At Aarhus University, Business and Social Sciences, the course of Information Systems for Business (ISB) has a large focus on collaboration and study group work throughout the semester. The students are asked to prepare student presentations in groups, negotiate discussion, give constructive feedback to each other and hand-in two large assignments. The course is concluded with the students handing-in an extensive group assignment, which is followed by an individual oral examination. Due to the large focus on study group work in the course ISB, success is closely related to well-functioning study group work. It is thus interesting to investigate to which degree New Media platforms have become a part of the study group work in the course ISB, as this paper sees New Media platforms as a part of modern communication culture, and examine what influence the use of these has on the group work.

2. Purpose

This paper aims to investigate the implications, collaboration and learning potentials of using New Media platforms within study group work. New Media platforms are for the purpose of this paper defined as Social Network Sites (such as Facebook), Learning Management Systems (such as Blackboard) and platforms for co-creation (such as Google Docs and Dropbox). This paper will clarify which New Media platforms, if any, students within the course ISB have used throughout the semester. It will investigate which benefits and pitfalls the use of New Media platforms can have on study group work and how well the use of these fits the course. Furthermore, this paper will look into the possibilities of using New Media platforms in a learning environment between lecturers, instructors and students.

The profile of this study is primarily theoretical within the area of which implications New Media platforms have on study group work within the course ISB among first semester Marketing and Management Communication (MMC) students.

3. Theoretical Background

Prior to the methodology, a theoretical framework will be provided to define the meaning of New Media platforms and the role these play in collaboration and learning environments.

3.1. The Context of New Media Platforms

A common definition of what characterises New Media platforms is very difficult to find, however, most scholars agree upon that one characteristic is that the platforms are user-generated. According to Blackshaw & Nazzaro (2004 cited in Mangold and Faulds 2009: 357-358): “[New Media platforms] describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues.” These thus include both co-creational platforms (Google Docs and Dropbox), Learning Management Systems (Blackboard) and Social Network Sites (Facebook), platforms that this study will be based on.

The common user-generated feature of New Media platforms revolves around the criteria that the quality of the platform content depends on the users’ contributions (Warr 2008: 592). The user-generated aspect fits the purpose of this paper well, as we wish to investigate how New Media platforms support and generate study group work of good quality. Warr (2008: 592) provides a suitable definition of the core function of New Media platforms, which can be applied to the all the above mentioned types: “Harnessing collective intelligence is sometimes described as the core pattern of Web 2.0¹; it describes architectures of participation that embrace the effective use of network effects and feedback loops to create systems that get better the more that people use them.” It can thus be said, that even though the nature of the platforms differ, they are all user-generated and focused on participation.

In order to understand how the different New Media platforms can enable and facilitate study group work, a description of these must be provided. Co-creational platforms, here with focus on Google Docs, are platforms that enable the users to create knowledge simultaneously with equal access and editing rights to it (WindowsTalk 2011). This platform can be used in the co-creation of assignments or presentations for the course ISB. This is substantiated by De Haro (2010 cited

¹ In this paper Web 2.0 and New Media platforms are identified to be alike.

in Gómez et al. 2012: 132) who argues that these features fit well with what is wanted in the educational field: “[...] collaboration, free dissemination of information or generation of own content for the construction of knowledge have been applied on an immediate basis to the educational field.”

Sites for cloud storage (Dropbox) are mainly used to store and share information and documents between the group members. In connection to this, it should be said that Social Network Sites, in particular Facebook, are also used for sharing and storing information and documents between group members (Roblyer et al. 2010). Roblyer et al. (2010: 135) further argue that when addressing theory concerning the usage of Social Network Sites in a learning environment Facebook is found to be one of the main platforms used by college students. This correspond well with that Social Network Sites are characterised as sites that help people maintain already established networks and enable users to create groups with specific persons in their network (Boyd and Ellison 2008: 211). This group function is deemed relevant in the context of a learning environment because students are able to create groups with the specific purpose of supporting study group and tutorial classes at university level: “These communities are formed with the objective of exchanging information and creating knowledge in a collaborative fashion” (Alvarez and Olivera-Smith 2013: 319).

For the case of this study, Learning Management Systems have also been included in the New Media platform mix in order to facilitate a discussion of the difference between these and the commercial New Media platforms with a learning perspective in mind. The students in the course ISB are connected to their teachers and lecturers on Blackboard, the Learning Management System employed by Aarhus University.

3.2. The Context of New Media Platforms in Collaboration and Learning Environments

According to many scholars, New Media platforms have proven to be useful in the context of a learning environment (Alvarez and Olivera-Smith 2013, Roblyer et al. 2010, Gómez et al. 2012). Social Network Sites are, as mentioned above, used by most college students in their social life, and Roblyer et al. (2010: 135) argue that: “Social Network Sites appear to be in the process of transitioning to other areas of teen life, including education.” Here they state that many students already converse and discuss educational perspectives on Social Network Sites without it having a formal connection to the university.

In the traditional view on group work, communication is key to a collaborative learning process (Ejsing 2003) and as stated above, one of the main features of New Media platforms is that they enable communication between the user and the user's network. This substantiates the idea that New Media platforms can enable and enhance study group work. Furthermore, Alvarez and Olivera-Smith (2013: 315) argue that: "the learning process that takes place in a social network is the result of various transactions, of multiple exchanges between participants, who switch between teacher and learner roles." Roles that in physical study groups might be locked in a certain pattern are, when played out on Social Network Sites, dynamically switching and thus make the exchange between group members more equal.

The Learning Management System Blackboard appears to contain many of the same features as Facebook, the main difference is, however, that in the case of Blackboard the environments created are not student-initiated (Alvarez and Olivera-Smith 2013: 315). This factor influences to which degree students wish to utilize the platform for group work, as well as how useful they find the platform.

So why is it relevant to consider using New Media platforms in a professional learning environment? Research regarding New Media platforms so far shows an overly positive attitude towards using social networks as an academic resource. As presented so far, students already utilise Facebook as a tool for communicating educational content, and including the teacher to this could function as a gatekeeper solution, where they monitor the contents correctness and relevance, thus enhancing the quality of the educational content (Roblyer et al. 2010: 136). Furthermore, the students see Facebook as a communication-building resource that could enhance ad hoc communication between themselves and their teachers (Roblyer et al. 2010: 134). Students hence argue that it would create a better communication and ease the process of asking questions and raising debates of professional quality.

In the following, we will investigate to what extent the students in the course ISB utilise New Media platforms in their study group work and why together with examining their opinion on implementing formal connections to their instructors and lecturers on Social Network Sites.

4. Methodology

In order to investigate the research question, we chose to conduct a series of focus group interviews, as a qualitative case study approach would allow for more in depth data (Daymon and Holloway 2011: 241). Focus groups allow the researcher to gather data from a range of different voices on the same subject at the same time, while having special emphasis on identifying particular behaviours and attitudes, which was of interest to this paper (Daymon and Holloway 2011:242). Additionally, it would allow us to gather all members of the study groups at the same time and function as a mean to achieve synergistic effects through interaction among the participants. The interviews were primarily conducted with the probing technique in order to acquire deep understanding of the subject matter; to investigate the interviewees' perception of New Media platforms usage in the specific course environment (Daymon and Holloway 2011: 231).

The focus group interviews took place in February 2014, approximately two months after the course had ended, at Aarhus University's premises, providing a neutral environment. The interviewees were made aware of the fact that their statements would be completely anonymous and that the interviews would be recorded. If the students had any objections towards this a satisfactory solution for both parties would have been found, however, such objections never arose during the interviews. In order to avoid any bias from the moderator's side, it was chosen that an instructor who had not been teaching the particular class would conduct the interview. The interviewees were further asked to give elaborating descriptions of their own experience with these platforms throughout the course. It should further be noted that the data could be influenced by the presence of the study groups own instructor, even though she is not actively participating in the interview (only taking notes). Additionally, the groups could be more keen to represent themselves in a favourable way. The risk of these cannot be completely eliminated, but we have tried to minimise them in every way possible during the interviews, as mentioned above, and according to the resources available to us.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing new perspectives to be brought up during the interviews dependent on what the interviewees said, providing more personal and descriptive data (Daymon and Holloway 2011: 225). The interviews took place in Danish as all group members in all groups were of Danish origin, which gave the interviewees a better opportunity to express themselves, while also minimising misunderstandings due to language barriers when the

questions were asked.

The focus groups were found among first semester students at the MMC programme at Aarhus University, Business and Social Science. They were chosen based on volunteering, though with the criteria of having had the course ISB and having some experience with New Media platforms in an educational setting; all students would thus have some experience with it as Blackboard is a prerequisite in the course. The groups would thus be pre-constituted providing a comfortable environment, which we considered to have a higher impact on the data than the potential limitation of members' hesitation about revealing sensitive ideas due to prior their history together (Daymon and Holloway 2011: 254). A total of three focus groups consisting of four participants (the required number of members in the course) were interviewed (a total of two men and ten women, including only one same-sex study group, were interviewed); Focus groups with four participants in each group is found sufficient for the purpose of this paper as it represents one third of a normal MMC tutorial class; which is considered, in our opinion, to be a fair amount in order to gain a general impression. Each interview took approximately 40 minutes and all were recorded and summarised in writing.

4.1. Main Issues of the Investigation of the Research Question

In order to investigate the usefulness of New Media platforms for study group work, questions concerning the following issues were asked in the focus group interviews (see appendix 1 for the full interview guide):

1. The participants were asked to give a general account for how the study group work performed in the course ISB academically, socially and in terms of effectiveness.
2. Describe which types of New Media platforms they used in their study group, and how these were used.
3. Clarify whether the participants found that these platforms contributed positively or negatively to their study group work.
4. Describe if there were any limitations when working with certain elements of the course ISB on New Media platforms.
5. Account for how the participants saw the balance between the social and the academic work aspect on New Media platforms (with specific focus on Facebook).

6. Whether the participants saw it as a good or bad idea to connect with instructors and lecturers on New Media platforms, additionally to Learning Management Systems, and which platform they would prefer in that case.

5. Findings

The following section has been divided into three subcategories; each corresponds to the structure of the interview guide, as this provides a more coherent exposition of the findings.

It should be mentioned that only one of the three focus groups were still in the same ISB study group they had during the course, while the two other groups had reformed in the beginning of the new semester (two months earlier); a comfortable environment would however still be apparent in all groups, as they all had been working together for a while before the interviews. We believed that this information could be used in a positive way as it could bring a more holistic data set, as we would actually be dealing with more than three study groups' usage of New Media platforms; two focus groups were in reality consisting of 8 difference study groups from the course ISB. Even though we were aware of the fact that some of the data could later be questioned, as it would be limited to one person's attitude and not the entire ISB study group. However, we did not see this as something of big importance for the purpose of this paper.

5.1. *The Study Group*

Before asking the students questions, which were directly related to their use of New Media platforms in the study group work, we wished to establish whether the groups have had a well-functioning work environment or not, as this could potentially have an impact on their choice of working platform.

When the students were asked about their impression of how their group work had functioned during the course, all students, in each focus group, agreed that they had been in well-functioning groups – both in an educational and social perspective.

“We found a good way to work together, it was very well-functioning. [...] We made sure that everyone had participated in or at least agreed on everything” Student 3.4

“We meet all the time, it was very natural. [...] We found that we were most effective when sitting together at home, especially when we had to model and write the big assignments” Student 3.3

“It was very well-functioning; we supplemented each other very well. We did not really disagree on anything. [...] We arranged to meet over Facebook and did the work at someone’s place in order to make something fun out of it.” Student 1.1

It is thus evident that all the groups chose to use a lot of time together, physically, during the semester in order to conduct course related work, but also managed to make it more fun by including social activities, such as cooking dinner together.

Furthermore, when the students were asked about their willingness to share their own private work i.e. notes with other members of the group, none of the students claimed having any problems with this. However, some of the students did at times find themselves a bit too generous, as they would continue to share their notes without ever having the favour returned.

“We share a lot, every time someone is sick; we have a group on Facebook where people can share.” Student 3.2

“It is pretty equal when it comes to sharing. “Sharing is caring” [...] [on tutorial basis] people are not practicing secrecy – we help each other out” Student 3.4

In conclusion, we found that all groups were well-functioning and very open minded about sharing their private notes with other members of not only the group, but also the entire tutorial class. This can definitely be related to the use of New Media platforms in study group work as these platforms are essentially about users collaboratively participating, co-creating and their willingness to share. The aspect that a well-functioning study group can benefit from the use of New Media platforms aligns well with the theoretical perspectives presented in this paper. Alvarez and Olivera-Smith (2013: 315) argue that: “[The features of Social Network Sites] reinforces a sense of community and collaboration, which makes Social Network Sites a viable alternative to proprietary course management systems such as Blackboard“.

5.2. *The Use of New Media Platforms in the Study Group Work*

Several New Media platforms were mentioned when the students were asked about which platforms they have used or tried during the course.

“We used Blackboard to upload student presentations for the whole tutorial class, Facebook to communicate, and Dropbox to share files as it provided a good structure” Student 1.1

“We tried to use Google Docs, but found it a bit too confusing when four people were all writing at the same time, so we dropped using it again. I think if we were only two it would have worked better.” Student 1.2

“We used Facebook to communicate and share everything. At one time we sat three together while the last person was with us over Facetime” Student 2.3

We found that almost all groups had used Facebook in their study group work in order to arrange meetings, discuss assignments and share documents. One group had in particular chosen not to use Facebook to share files, as they found it messy to store documents in and instead they used Dropbox as it provided them with the opportunity to actually make folders for specific assignments and subjects. Facebook was then just used to communicate between group members. This statement corresponds well with the fact that Facebook is not a platform created for sharing the amount of documents demanded at a university level (Roblyer et al. 2010 135), however, as we became aware of, many students actually prefer the Facebook solution to both communicate and share files, although the platforms are not mutually excluding. This could be based on the fact that, as the students mention, they are constantly checking their Facebook, which provides them with a more effective behaviour in relation to noticing what the other group members are doing.

When the students are asked more directly about which benefits or pitfalls they have found in using these New Media platforms, students specifically emphasise the feature of being more efficient and effective than more traditional study group work would have allowed.

“You have the opportunity to share things quickly and they function as a sort of backup because your documents can be found again online. This is especially useful when we have to do class

presentations and your own computer does not work all the sudden.” Student 2.2

“When you sit together it is useful for sharing ones pearls of wisdom very fast, which helps improve the quality of the work you are doing. Additionally, it improves the effectiveness as more than one person can write in the document.” Student 2.3

“It makes the communication a thousand times easier and you would only see each other the few hours you are at school. It is much easier than for example texting.” Student 1.3

Additionally, it is clear that the students found that these platforms made the working roles within the group more equal. This corresponds well the idea of New Media platforms help to democratise society, as more people are gaining the control and power of knowledge and information: “The learning process that takes place in a social network is the result of various transactions, of multiple exchanges between participants, who switch between teacher and learner roles” (Alvarez and Olivera-Smith 2013: 315). It is evident that working across a New Media platform enables more equally divided group work where everyone participates, because, as one interviewee stated, your non-participation became more obvious online.

“When something was uploaded on Facebook it was important to us that everyone commented to confirm that they had seen and understood it.” Student 1.2

“When we used Social Media, it equalised the roles more. We would all give inputs because it wasn’t fair if it was only one person who contributed all the time.” Student 2.1

However, these platforms are not without pitfalls. Some students mention the dangers about using Social Network Sites in study group work:

“When you use Facebook to share your school documents, it is easy to also go and check all kinds of other stuff on Facebook, when it is already open.” Student 2.4

“A disadvantage is also that when we made the notes together it was an easy way out to just lean

back and let the others do it. It was served to you.” Student 2.2

“There is always the mandatory 20 minutes before we can start the work, like when you are going on a trip, everybody needs to pee before you can leave, we all just need to check Facebook before we can start working.” “But I think it is made up of for being so easy.”

Students 3.4 and 3.2

Disadvantages are definitely the students’ choice of procrastination and also the distraction aspect. However, the last quote shows that group 3 found it useful to spend the first 20 minutes when meeting to get the ‘Facebook fix’ out of their systems by allowing members to check in on their social life first and afterwards keep total focus on the course assignments.

In relation to how these platforms – and the tools they offer – fit together with the content of the course ISB, the students do not see many limitations. It is only when dealing with the more practical aspects of the course (modelling business processes) that the students deem New Media platform a less useful tool. Most groups chose to meet physically under this part of the course and either do the assignments in hand on paper or combine it with technological platforms

“The assignments where you were supposed to model and draw businesses were difficult to explain over Facebook. These assignments required that we were together physically.”

Student 3.4

“With the modelling part, it was a bit difficult because we had to draw by hand and then transfer it to the computer afterwards.” “It is easier to share text online.” Students 1.2 and 1.3

In order to gain a better understanding of why students seemed to prefer Social Network Sites (Facebook) over the Learning Management System (Blackboard) offered to them by Aarhus University we asked the students why they preferred using one over the other.

“Facebook is very user friendly, while Blackboard is more complex. It demands that you understand the way the system is set up. Also you are on Facebook all the time; it is connected to your phone. You get notifications straight away” Students 3.2 and 3.4

“It often happens that people from our program uploads the power points and texts to Facebook when they have found them on Blackboard, to make it easier for others to find them. Then they [the other students] don’t have to look for them on Blackboard.” Student 2.2

It is clear from this statement that the students feel it is easier to use Facebook as they check it daily. However, this is – as some of the other students mention – based on the fact that they have no previous experience with Blackboard and find it quite incomprehensible and difficult to manoeuvre around in. This is additionally reinforced by the fact that the lecturers are also having a hard time using the Learning Management System, Blackboard. If the students had been introduced to the functions and tools in Blackboard from the beginning and had a short course in it, their preferences could potentially have been different. However, it is hard to make any conclusion on this subject and we are only left with making mere assumptions, which have no empirical background for being claimed and is hence mere guesswork.

5.3. The Use of New Media Platforms in a Learning Environment

To gain a better understanding of students’ attitudes towards New Media platforms usage in the teaching setting, questions about the potential role that these could have in the future learning environment were asked. This was mainly done in order to open up for thoughts and ideas about how these platforms could change the more traditional style of teaching into a more collaborative and effective style that incorporates the new technological developments in society. The thought of a positive influence on educational communication was highly emphasised in the theoretical perspective presented in this paper. Among others, Alvarez and Olivera-Smith (2013: 322) argue that: “they [Social Network Sites] afford ample and potentially effective opportunities to improve student learning in a university environment”. It is thus worth noting that New Media platforms are not in themselves generating learning, but through the active use of the participants they can become it.

The students were mainly asked about their opinion of incorporating Social Network Sites in the learning environment between the instructor, the lecturer and the tutorial class participants. Most students said that they believed it could result in more effective communication channels between the parties; however, found it too incomprehensible on lecture basis and dependent on

the personality of the lecturer/instructor.

“It would open up for some doors when it comes to sharing things and you would be able to get a faster answer, or at least notice faster, to course related questions.” Student 2.4

“It would be so much easier to have a Facebook group with our instructor; it would make him or her more accessible to us.” Student 1.2

It is evident from these statements that they find the potential use of New Media platforms in the learning environment beneficial, as they believe that they would be more aware of any changes in the course, and additionally find it easier to become updated. Furthermore, as argued by Alvarez and Olivera-Smith (2013: 320): “teachers may intervene (and even participate) in Social Network Sites in order to strengthen their relationship with the students”. Thus the connectedness between the ISB students and their instructors on Social Network Sites might help strengthen the relationship in the class as well as facilitate efficient communication.

A few were more critical and found that the combination of private and professional life could result in some unwanted stress, and that new ethics surrounding the different role of the parties would be needed, as the interaction between them would also change.

“Yes and no, we already have a group on Facebook ourselves (the tutorial class). There is an aspect of it where students and teachers no longer would be separated, which could cause some students to be more hesitant to ask questions. The social aspect would also disappear as one cannot joke in the same way.” Student 3.4

The above student emphasises the overlapping of social and academic lives, which he or she sees as potentially dangerous and stressful. This is an aspect that is also highlighted by Alvarez and Oliviera-Smith (2013: 320) who propose that teachers act with caution when they interfere on Social Network Sites.

In conclusion it can be said that the students are generally very open towards embracing new communication channels between themselves and their educators, but there are some unexplored

aspects, which could have great influence on its success as mentioned above. However, these are beyond the scope of this paper.

6. Conclusion

The findings suggest that the students, in the study groups interviewed, see New Media platforms as helpful in their study group work, both in the production of student presentations, sharing of documents, joint assignments and general questions. They generally felt that New Media platforms facilitated easier and more efficient communication; as well as providing better sharing opportunities between group members and thus ease knowledge sharing in general. They specifically highlighted Social Network Sites such as Facebook and knowledge sharing platforms such as Dropbox or Google Docs as well functioning in terms of group work.

The interviewees mentioned many positive effects that the use of New Media platforms had on their study group work in the course ISB, among others that it facilitated a more equal delegation of group work and made the group work, in general, more serious. However, some limitations also became evident during the interviews. Several interviewees mentioned that even though some platforms helped to facilitate the group work, others, like Facebook, also had a downside to it. Facebook could function as a distraction when conducting educational work; following up on one's social life could be more appealing at times than actually doing education-related work. Some groups, however, found that if the group agreed on spending 20 minutes in the beginning of a group session checking Facebook, they could focus more easily on the group work afterwards. Additionally, it was mentioned that when students had to work with practical modelling assignments, these platforms alone were not sufficient, and were deemed less useful due to the complexity of the task. Traditional physical group work, or a combination of the two, was preferred. All the students agreed upon that the modelling assignments required drawing sketches on paper and discussing processes, which would have become too difficult to handle in a chat room.

When discussing the use of New Media platforms on a meta-level in the tutorials, here with special emphasis on Non-Learning Management Systems, most students were positive towards the use of Social Network Sites (Facebook) as a communication tool between instructor and students, while to comprehensive on lecture basis. They expressed that this could make

communication between both instructor and students, and among students with the instructor as moderator, more efficient and effective, for instance making it easier to get a quick – and right – answer to questions concerning the course material. This was based on the fact that the students already checked Facebook daily, and found Blackboard too difficult to manoeuvre. This could of course also be a biased opinion, as Blackboard is a new system in which both students and teachers yet have little experience, and the fact that the students have not had any introduction to it.

In conclusion, New Media platforms are already widely used by students to facilitate their study group work in the course ISB, as they find that it can make the group work both more effective and efficient. However, when dealing with the modelling part of the course some limitations are evident; these platforms are not sufficient in themselves, due to the complexity of the task, and traditional group work - physical meetings - is also needed. Additionally, students are very positive toward expanding the use of New Media platforms in the learning environment between instructor and students.

7. Future studies and limitations

We believe that these findings can be generalised to any course with a similar collaboration or learning environment as found in the course ISB; however, we are aware that this calls for further investigation. Several comments have actually, during the interviews, been made on the potentially benefits the implementation of New Media platforms can have or already have on other courses; it is thus interesting to examine the use of New Media platforms on a more holistic educational level and investigate if universities potentially could do anything to accommodate and support the use of these platforms in their collaboration and learning environments.

It is hence relevant to look into a more prospective use of New Media platforms in the learning environment at university level, beyond Learning Management Systems such as Blackboard, and investigate which implications could come from universities taking a more active role in incorporating social platforms for educational purposes. This is deemed very relevant based on the positive attitude found among the interviewees to include their instructors in their groups on Social Network Sites such as Facebook.

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9. Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview guide (Translated from Danish)

Introduction

Thank you for coming today and for wanting to participate in our research.

This research is concerned about New Media platforms in the environment of collaboration and learning within the course ISB. New Media platforms are defined as Social Network Sites (such as Facebook), Learning Management Systems (such as Blackboard) and platforms for co-creation (Google Docs and Dropbox). Our focus is on your study group work conducted during the course semester with your study group at that time. Due to objectivity reasons your instructor during the course will not be conducting the interview, but merely taking notes. The interview will be recorded, so if anyone has any objections towards this please let us know and a solution will be found. Additionally, we would like to emphasize that this interview is anonymous, so no one apart from us (the interviewers) will know who you are.

We would prefer if you would allow each other to finish your sentences and not interrupt if possible; and additionally to come with elaborative answers.

Do you have any questions?

The Study Group

1. Is this the same study group you were in during the course ISB?
2. Overall, how did you think your group work functioned with regards to the course ISB?
3. Could you define your own role in the study group compared to the other members?
4. How did the study group meet up to conduct study related work (student presentations etc.)?
5. When you met did you meet at the time agreed upon and conducted the work you were supposed to do after collaborative agreement?
6. How did you as an individual member of the group feel about sharing your work with the other members?

The Use of New Media Platforms in the Study Group Work

7. Did you use any form of New Media platforms during your group work in the course ISB?
8. How did you use these platforms? In which situations (when you all participated at the same time or independent on each other)?
9. In relation to the each member's role in the group, did the use of New Media platforms enhance this or not?
10. How did these platforms affect your group work (in relation to if you were to do the work without them in a more traditional manner)?
11. What benefits and pitfall do you see as a result of using these platforms?
12. How do you think that these platforms tools and opportunities fitted to the different segments of the course ISB (modelling, business structures and strategy, general about ERP systems)?
13. Did the use of New Media platforms affect the quality of your work?
14. Did you feel that the use of these platforms made it easier or more difficult to share your work with each other?
15. Did you feel that there is a difference in the usage of Learning Management Systems (Blackboard) and Social Network Sites (Facebook) for educational purposes?
16. Do you use these platforms in different courses?

The Use of New Media Platforms in a Learning Environment

18. Could you imagine using these platforms as a communication tool between the class-participants, the instructor and lecturer?
19. What is your opinion about it in relation to professionalism and private life?

Thank you for participating!