# FRI: Can Social Media Promote Inclusion In Education? (Sioban James)

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**Cloud created by:**

**Sioban James**
10 January 2019

## Extra content

**Conferene Abstract:**

‘Can social medial promote inclusion in education?’

Sioban James

The Open University is so called because it is 'open to people, places, methods and ideas' (Open University, 2019), this enables access to study often without the formal academic qualifications required by traditional universities (ibid). Whilst this creates greater equality of access, it can mean students embark on an undergraduate degree course without the necessary literacy and numeracy skills required for study at this level.  As an Open University tutor with the Business School, I see how this can manifest; students unable to fully engage with course content due to gaps in prior learning become disaffected, fall behind and may disengage entirely.

Sfard's (1998) metaphors of acquisition and participation explain why a lack of prior learning may exclude students from aspects of study.  Without prior acquisition of required units of knowledge, students may, in effect, be excluded from participation, for example, a student with poor numeracy skills cannot analyse financial statements. Wherestudents are knowledge-poor, lacking prior numeracy schemata, how information is presented is of much greater significance (Salomon, 1997); although'toolkits' exist to support students, these require a level of skill to access, are not course specific and cannot always meet student needs.  My project aims to address this, to develop accessible, course specific resources, units of knowledge that once acquired will foster participation and inclusion.

"If the mountain won't come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain"

(Turkish proverb, retold by Francis Bacon)

Social media is ubiquitous, 65% of the UK population have a social media account (Ofcom,

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2018) and it is now recognised as part of the pattern of daily life (Selwyn and Stirling, 2015) with users spending an average of 1 hour and 54 minutes daily accessing such platforms (Black Dog New Media, 2018). Many students today are digital natives who expect interaction via social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2016), this expectation is demonstrated by Open University students who create student-mediated social media spaces – most popularly, course wide Facebook pages.  Seeing how readily students interact on Facebook, engage with WhatsApp chats, even at the expense of designated course forums, encouraged me to consider how the ubiquity of such platforms could be a vehicle for my project outputs, an accessible way to disseminate resources to students.

My conference presentation will introduce the resources I am developing and a plan for dissemination of these using social media.  In the first instance these will be short video presentations introducing students to important aspects of study, such as referencing and the importance of using models to help structure academic writing.  The idea for this type of output has been informed by my experience of the Open University's management of their social media presence and their use of Facebook and Twitter to engage followers in leaning.  For example, their January 'Brainteaser' activities that attract many thousands of views (Open University, 2019).  Although I cannot expect to replicate such a level of interaction, my presentation will also discuss how I plan to assess the success of my project.

References

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The Open University (2019) 2 January. Available at https://www.facebook.com/theopenuniversity/(Accessed 5 January 2019)

Sioban James
10:33 on 10 January 2019

+ **Add extra content**

## Embedded Content

### Conference Poster - Biteable animation

Conference Poster - Biteable animation

added by Sioban James

**+ Add embedded content**

## Contribute

**Discussion (11)**    Links (1)    Academic References (0)

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**Annette Hendley**
9:34pm 17 January 2019 **Permalink**

Your poster is so engaging. Really well done. I am wondering if the more instant replies on WhatsApp and Facebook make it more user friendly and it is less formal than the forums. While I enjoy the interaction on the forums there is a long timelapse and you seldom have a conversation. I think people check they their social media more and the notifications are instant.

Will you just distribute the information on social media or are you planning to be actively involved with the group?

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**Sioban James**
10:43am 18 January 2019 **Permalink**

*'I am wondering if the more instant replies on WhatsApp and Facebook make it more user friendly and it is less formal than the forums.'*

Yes!  This is in some ways exaclty what I am hopng to get across - having a few problems trying to convey this in an academic sesne - it's tending to be a hunch rather than anything I can fully support - but you are the second person this week to get this so that's me happy!  (The other person was a friend - an RE teacher.)

It's not informal learning, what I want to help with, the topics I cover, are very much scaffolding for formal study, but the setting is more on the lines of where infomral learning takes place, i'm struggling with the academic bits of the assingmnts but the doing stuff is far more enjoyable.

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**patrick shearer**
10:50pm 21 January 2019 **Permalink**

How good is this poster Sioban! Really engaging - congratulations.

I agree with Annette regarding the forums - especially with so many of them. The problem is underpinning the academic stuff with the design tasks. So many of the good posters eg yours, Annette's and Kelly's to name a few - are creative and unique - things like critically

reviewing sources sometimes doesnt seem to sit well alongside the creation of this kind of work.

**Munir Moosa Sadruddin**
10:17am 25 January 2019 Permalink

Interesting! You rightly said that without having prior skills, one cannot embark upon any degree with ease.

It is interesting to share that social media use for academia is discouraged in Pakistan despite of knowing its potentials! I agree with Annette about the time lapse. I experienced the same during my project when a few potential users did not reply me in time.

Are you planning to use any specific tool to assess your project?

Munir

**Sonia Pardos**
10:14pm 30 January 2019 Permalink

Hello Sioban,

This sounds like an interesting project, as you mentioned, when there is lack of basic knowledge in an area that you are intending to study at a higher level, one can end up very demotivated. I have been there before =/

*"My project aims to address this, to develop accessible, course specific resources, units of knowledge that once acquired will foster participation and inclusion"* It will be interesting to know how this can be achieved.

By the way, I am sorry I missed your poster before. It is the first time I see it and I think it is great! I love it, I love the story, the plasticine characters and scenarios. Very ingenious. Well done.

**Phill Grimes**
9:10am 9 February 2019 Permalink

I feel that there may, also, be age and/or academic related differences in how students feel about learning that way.

One example being that one group of 2nd yr Level 3 students were really happy to use whatsapp/snapchat for info but another group (1st year Level 2) were horrified that I would

be invading their space (snapchat) and asked me not to.

### Annette Hendley
2:39pm 15 February 2019 Permalink

I really enjoyed your presentation Sioban. I hope everything is well. The video worked perfectly and you explained your idea very clearly. Since we had the online conversation, I've been interested in your project. While mine is a school set-up where these type of social media groups are not as common - though the A-level students use WhatsApp groups - I know that these type of small teaching bits can make a massive difference to close those gaps.

I think you get pass the 'invading their space' idea, which is a genuine problem for some, by provinding the bits to the group admin to upload. You don't have to be actively part of the group to provide them with resources and if there is a problem they can't solve between them, the same person can contact you. It will also help to reduce your workload. This is making me think how I can get more engagment with my Trello project by actually getting them to post some of the documents on their own groups. It is truly a Mohammed and the mountain issue.

### Dr Simon Ball
3:51pm 18 February 2019 Permalink

Hi Sioban

Well done on a great presentation! Such a shame you couldn't be with us in person but your recording was very well received. Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your recorded presentation. Please respond in whatever way you choose.

Best wishes

Simon

- I love https://biteable.com/ somethiing i've not used before (but will do!)
- If students are sending their result in, how will this impact on tutor load?
- Sioban, do you think that the sheer number of social media platforms is a barrier for your project? When some students are on Facebook, others on Twitter, What'sApp, etc, is it possible to reach them all?
- How to record such presentation? Any software?
- Dont forget EDMODO
- If students are kept on board from Level I to II, this is good for students, and good for the university
- Are students happy to incude ALs in their FB conversations?
- Have you considered using Facebook group analytics to measure success?
- Really good presentation. I see paralleles in my own university. Studnets often don't access all the resources available to them on Blackboard due to having to log in etc.
- I had issues with [module] students using Facebook in a group they set up. Once they were aware I was a tutor, I was blocked from the group. My concerns are that

unmoderated groups spring up where there is risk of collusion and plagiarism. How do we foster a community of practice while avoiding the development of an echo chamber?

> Probably still important to have alternative safe space for students

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**[Sioban James](#)**
6:02pm 25 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Thanks for the quetsions and sorry I was not there to answer these on the day.

- If students are sending their result in, how will this impact on tutor load?

*This is a valid question, and it did occur to me that this would add to a tutor's workload.  I don't have a definitive answer to this, were this managed like a Facebook page, it could be managed much as course wide student cafes are - they have a paid moderator tutor who keeps an eye on things.  Tutors would also not be expected to 'mark' interactions as such, just at relevant points, keep this moving on.*

*But this is a really good question, to date, I have only managed this with a single group of students, how it would scale up is something that I definitely need to think about.*

- Sioban, do you think that the sheer number of social media platforms is a barrier for your project? When some students are on Facebook, others on Twitter, What'sApp, etc, is it possible to reach them all?

*Not really know, the platforms used would be determined by the university – for example, they would set up a designated Facebook page / YouTube channel where interaction could take place.*

- If students are kept on board from Level I to II, this is good for students, and good for the university

*Yes, with competition for students and increasing interest in retention for higher education providers arguably the OU needs to look at all ways that it can keep students on-board.*

- Are students happy to incude ALs in their FB conversations?

*This has not been a problem so far – I mention in the presentation that I have responded to students on Facebook – there are usually a number of tutors 'lurking' about and it has never been an issue – that said, we do not actually get involved unless it is to respond to a question or correct some misunderstanding.  I find that it actually tends to be the other way – tutors are reluctant to get involved in student's social media – not wanting to mix the personal and professional, something Bernadette considered in her presentation.*

- Have you considered using Facebook group analytics to measure success?

*No – this is something for me to look into, thanks for the tip!*

- Really good presentation. I see paralleles in my own university. Studnets often don't access all the resources available to them on Blackboard due to having to log in etc.

*I know, why is that, even clicking a few buttons seems too much for some!*

- I had issues with [module] students using Facebook in a group they set up. Once they were aware I was a tutor, I was blocked from the group. My concerns are that unmoderated groups spring up where there is risk of collusion and plagiarism. How do we foster a community of practice while avoiding the development of an echo chamber?

*This can happen, and as tutors we have seen issues with WhatsApp in this regard, bad advice from one student for a TMA was reflected in a great number of assignments. Trouble is we cannot stop these groups arising, and as I indicated, students do expect them. I don't have any simple solutions to this, other than to suggest that we make and manage our own social media spaces where students can come, I do think that a lot of it is really just about convenience, if we make it so, they may respond.*

- Probably still important to have alternative safe space for students

*I am guessing that this means away from the university and tutors? This is not actually something we can manage, students will create their own – even if there were a course moderated Facebook page and pretty sure they would set up their own alternative channels of communication.*

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**Dr Simon Ball**
8:12am 28 February 2019 Permalink

Many Congratulations Sioban! Your presentation has been voted by delegates to be one of the most effective of the H818 Online Conference 2019 and you are officially one of our H818 Presentation Star Open Badge Winners! Please see how to Apply for your Badge here: http://cloudworks.ac.uk/badge/view/33

Well done!

Simon

H818 Conference Organiser

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**Sioban James**
12:47pm 28 February 2019 Permalink

Cool - thank you, this means a lot, I hope I applied for it correctly :-)

## Contribute to the discussion

Please log in to post a comment. Register here if you haven't signed up yet.

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