SAT: Study Of The Use of Closed Facebook Groups (CFGs) By Standards Professionals And The Presence Of Community (Glenn Bosmans)

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24 January 2019

The overall purpose of the study is to assess standards professionals' interaction with, and attitude towards, the CFGs e.g. how often and how do they access them. This would inform possible areas of improvement and development of the CFGs.

The second theme gathers evidence of the presence of a community of practice and an epistemic community among the members.

A community of practice (CoP) is a "group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". The essential elements of a CoP are those of domain community and practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

An epistemic community is defined as a group of professionals, often from a variety of different disciplines, which produce policy-relevant knowledge about complex technical issues (Haas, 1992). The essential elements of an epistemic community being shared beliefs, shared causal beliefs, shared beliefs of validity and shared a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed.

In order to establish whether a CoP / epistemic community was functioning in this domain, a project was undertaken in which members of eight regional Closed Facebook Groups were surveyed. The members are all members of national, regional or international standardization organisations or work fields related to standardization from developing countries across the globe.

An online survey using Google Docs template was developed and distributed to the members using the discussion and messaging features within the Closed Facebook Groups.

The survey comprised 7 sections. Your background, Interaction with Closed Facebook Groups, Posting to the CFGs, Online Communities Part 1, Online Communities Part 2 and Final Thoughts. A total of 44 questions were asked.

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Responses to date indicate that almost all respondents access Facebook and many access the CFGs on a daily basis. Three quarters have posted an item onto the CFGs themselves and all have 'liked' a comment. The machine translations of posts are considered accurate. 93% of respondents prefer the posts to be in the English language.

Responses from the questions regarding the presence of communities indicate that the elements identified are present.

To date the responses to the survey have been low (only 16) and they are a self-selecting group from among the members of the CFGs.

The responses, including the open statements indicate that the members are benefitting and learning from the CFGs. However, the level of interactivity among members could be improved.

The responses indicate the presence of both a community of practice and an epistemic community. Further research is necessary to assess the effectiveness of the communities and what impact their presence has on the field of standardization.

These results and associated conclusions will be discussed further in this conference presentation.

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Glenn Bosmans
19:06 on 6 March 2019

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Glenn Bosmans
7:19pm 24 January 2019 Permalink

References

Lave, J., & Wenger, W. (1991). Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. In *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

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Munir Moosa Sadruddin
9:26am 25 January 2019 Permalink

Hello! I found your topic interesting! May i know which region you have taken into consideration for closed groups? I am curious to learn if you have joined closed facebook groups? Did you find any difference in those and open groups? Are privacy issues similar? Do you think network opportunities are more in open groups than closed one?

Was your research longitudinal or cross-sectional in nature?

Since your target population has joined groups intentionally, did you find anything unique in your findings? You can share this in presentation

I am excited to learn more about your project as I have joined few closed groups for neworking for H818 project and found it very useful but I also have few bad experiences!

Munir

Glenn Bosmans
10:01pm 25 January 2019 Permalink

Hi Munir,

Following is list of the 8 CFGs, their regions and their language:
• Rabat DNSS – MENA – English, French and Arabic
• Colombo DNSS – South Asia – English
• Dakar DNSS – West and Central Africa – French
• Tashkent DNSS – East Europe & Central Asia – English and Russian
• Havana DNSS – Central and South America – Spanish
• Montego Bay DNSS – Caribbean – English
• Jakarta DNSS – East and South East Asia – English
• Kigali DNSS - East and Southern Africa – English

The CFGs are not joinable i.e you can link posts in one CFG to another CFG but only people who are in both would be able to see the post in the second group.

With different languages and regional interests, I think its best to maintain unique regional groups and also it means that the participants are more likely ot know each other,

The closed group enable you to focus and maintain only people who are relevant to the topic. People seem to appreciate this.

No privacy issues though I do tend to ask people if I can post anything relevant from their actual facebook page (I am friends with some of them but try to maintain a seperate social facebook page for personal interactions and the CFGs for work related stuff), With CFGs you are not friends as such with people and anything you post on your personal site doesnt appear in the CFG. People only see your own profile in accordance with how you have set your privacy levels.

I dont know, I think that the open groups are more for marketing where you are tryinng to contact as many people as possible ie for a product, company or service. For the close group you are trying to restrict the access for what ever reason. So both serve different purposes.

As for longitudinal, I am not sure what this means,

As for anything unique. Not sure.

The whole role of being an Admin of a CFG is very interesting. It can be a controversial and powerful role but also you have to guide the direction of the group. A good source of information is actually another CFG, run by Facebook for Admins, lots of shairng ideas and issues,

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Phill Grimes
11:25pm 13 February 2019 Permalink

Glenn

Having studied this module I realise that networking is something I can work on, so am intrigued as to how the closed facebook groups do in open practice.

Seeing your question back to Munir - longitudinal research is generally studying the changes in the same group over 2 or 3 points in time. So you would be comparing the same group at a baseline, then maybe 12 weeks later (for example)

Peter Scott
11:07am 15 February 2019 Permalink

Is there a risk of the creation of an echo chamber assocoated in the group being closed? There are a number of articles discussiong this but Grömping (2014) has a great overview.

Grömping, M. (2014) '"Echo Chambers": Partisan Facebook Groups during the 2014 Thai Election', *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 39–59 [Online]. DOI: 10.1177/1326365X14539185.

Glenn Bosmans
1:08pm 16 February 2019 Permalink

Hi Peter,

Thank you for the question.

I think this question underllines the fact that the same tool i.e. Closed Facebook Groups, can be used in different ways.

If you set up the CFG as a forum for discussions on a belief or a political viewpoint, then this may lead to the occurence of an echo chamber, as everyone who is in it, **presumably** has the same viewpoint.

On the other hand, these CFGs are not for the discusson of views, they are a forum for people performing specific roles, ie standards professionals who make up a community of practice. They all do the same job and are participating on the basis of a shared activiity. It is a place for practice to be shared and discussed.

Esssentially, the question would be, why would you have non-experts participate in a discussion among experts. For example, among a group of student teachers, sharing their learning and experience of undergoing training to complete their PGCE, what advantage would there be to have someone in that group with no link to teaching? They wouldnt understand the culture, the jargon etc and wouldnt be following the same learning process that the student teachers are. On the other hand if you had qualified teachers also in the group, that may add a helpful dimension to discussions.

Going back to where a a CFG is used as a forum for shared beliefs or viewpoint, I would assert that the use of a CFG actually constitutes a safe space for individuals who may hold a view, to test that view and discuss more openly and constructively with their co-believers about their own assumptions

If anything, an open group or Facebook page, ie one in which the opinions are viewable and attackable by those who do not hold those views, actually leads to a more confrontational, aggressive and partisan form of discussion. Because they are open, you can easily view the activities of political organisations and see how one dimensional and abusive the posts can be.

Dr Simon Ball
5:10pm 18 February 2019 Permalink

Hi Glenn

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose - I suspect you may wish to deal with the first few in one response!

Best wishes

Simon

- Did any of the results from your survey surprise you?
- Interesting that machine translations were good enough to be seen positively. That's a good sign.
- I would imagine the time of year affected why responses were by phone. Do you feel the results might have differed if undertaken at the end of the academic year and if so how?
- This throws up intersting topic - is lurking a form of involvemnt?
- Looks like a great one for a longditudinal study (if possible?)
- Can you say more about the kinds of posts, and by whom, were made -- and what types of posts are most popular?
- How much moderation was involved?

Glenn Bosmans
10:40pm 23 February 2019 Permalink

I have added the results of the survey.

The data has been downloaded from the Google Form survey into an Excel spreadsheet, as I needed to remove the respondent email addresses and date of submission as this could have identified them.

I will try and post a link to the data in original Google Form format as this has some nice pie charts

Glenn Bosmans
10:58pm 23 February 2019 **Permalink**

I have also posted a Dropbox ink below to the Presentatiions created for the conference.

One is the **full version**, which was eventually cut down to fit into the required 10 minute presentation in the **final version**.

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/af4q520p5kikdry/AACkddxamDkrN3E09mojY7u-a?dl=0

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Glenn Bosmans
9:41am 2 March 2019 **Permalink**

Below is a list of responses to the questions,

Did any of the results from your survey surprise you?

Overall, I got 22 responses, and to be honest I would have hoped for more. I pushed the survey with the groups and individually contacted people, so was expecting a figure of around 50. However the data I did get was detailed enough to answer the questions I had, so happy with that.

Another thing that surprised me was to do with language i.e.people preferred (or at least the respondents to the English survey) to read posts in English. Also I was pleasantly surprised about how content people were with the qualtiy of the machine translations.

Interesting that machine translations were good enough to be seen positively. That's a good sign.

Yes, not least because it opens up a whole new world of social media, websites and resources to the members of the group. Basically I use the rule that If I can understand a document in a foreign language using the built in translation tools, then can anyone and the document is valid for sharing.

I would imagine the time of year affected why responses were by phone. Do you feel the results might have differed if undertaken at the end of the academic year and if so how?

I don't think the results were linked to the academic year, The survey was for standards professionals who work on a calendar year. It covers non-Christian countries but I think most culture have an end of year break. Also other survey data showed that a quarter of people used their work computer to access the CFGs so they may have been effected by the timing of the survey.

The survey itself was not conducted by phone, rather it was an online survey. However with the messaging function, I could have followed up some of the participants with a phone or video chat but felt it was intrusive to push too hard. I wish to maintain a good relationship with the members of the CFGs.

This throws up intersting topic - is lurking a form of involvemnt?

Well the results show that it is as I explicitly asked about this and the responses showed they learned about the topics anyway. I have had to accept that lurking is taking place since the inception of the CFGs. Indeed if the participants only gained through lurking I would be minded to accept that as a positive outcome.

Looks like a great one for a longditudinal study (if possible?)

Yes, if I had the time, resources, support. Keeping the CFGs going and functioning will be the principal priority and then seeing if further research can be done.

Can you say more about the kinds of posts, and by whom, were made -- and what types of posts are most popular?

Good question and one I wish I had had time to elaborate on in the presentation as I think this is just as important. The posts are largely shares of social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) as well as websites, resources, documents from a range of sources. Overall the posts cover the are areas of producing a national standardization strategy (and all the parts thereof - its a very wide field in itself), standardization activities in a country (which again is wide as there are thousands of International Standards and topics which many countries are interested in) and wider quality issues (such as accreditation, cerftification and national quality policies). It also covers some wider developmental issues such as SDGs, Belt and Road African integration, and a whole host of topics.

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The additional element is to share the posts among the eight CFGs. Sometime the post even originate one of the CFGs and I can share them among the other eight. Note that to view a post originating in one CFG in another CFG I have to copy and paste it into another one. I can't share as the only the people who are in both the first and the second CFG could view the post in the second CFG.

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Depends what you mean. In terms of posting items, they mainly come from me.

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In terms of calming down heated discussions, it sometimes happens that there is a disagreement but these people argue very politely, they know that they are representing their country in their role and that they will no doubt meet the person they are argueing with during a forthcoming meeting. I don't feel I am moderating disputes.

In terms of the moderator role, I am however very aware of not putting up materials which show any kind of politcial, (left or right wing) national, regional bias or tropes. There is a whole spectrum of beliefs and viewpoints reflected in the countries represented.

[Glenn Bosmans](#)
9:42am 2 March 2019 [Permalink](#)

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