

Appraisal of Learning of Skill Based Subject through WhatsApp by Urban Under Graduate Students

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Abstract

As the social media have penetrated the lives of student community, it can be used for teaching and learning of specified academic subjects. In addition, it can be used for the conduct and valuation of tests that are performed as soon as the teaching and learning process is over. In this connection, the present research was devoted to use WhatsApp as an educational tool for teaching and learning the Life Skill (LS) based subject. It was also devoted to study its effectiveness as an educational tool among the urban undergraduate student community. In the present research, the WhatsApp group of students was formed and the LS based digital modules were systematically posted to them. The students had learnt the educational contents in the modules and participated in the attitudinal, performance and skill tests. The attitudinal test results showed that the student participants were optimistic towards learning through social media. The performance based results showed that the academic performance scores of the students varied from 64.0% to 80.0% with the standard deviation of 4.95 in the average score of 71.0%. The skill based results showed that the skill scores of the students ranged between 60.0% and 76.0% with the standard deviation of 5.73 in the average score of 67.5%. As these were constructive connection among LS based digital module, learning through social media and performance of student community, it could be concluded that the social media would be effectively used in the teaching learning process of LS subjects especially for the benefit of student community.

Keywords: Attitudinal status, Academic and skill scores, Learning of LS subject through social media

Introduction

The present generation of students is considered to be a part of the net generation. This part of the net generation has a constructive connection with digital media by exhibiting significantly elevated espousal, engagement and embracing rates than those of earlier generations.¹⁰ As the social media have penetrated the lives of student community, it can be used for teaching and learning of specified academic subjects. In addition, it can be used for the conduct and valuation of tests as soon as the teaching and learning process is over.⁹ At this juncture, it is indispensable to develop digital contents pertaining to a Life Skill (LS) subject and examine subsequently the feasibility of WhatsApp to

communicate and discuss the developed digital contents. In addition, it is indispensable to examine the effectiveness of the learning of the digital contents of the LS subject by student community through WhatsApp communication. In these perspectives, the present research was extensively carried out by adopting the standard materials and methods and the research outcomes have been documented in this research article for the benefit of student community, teaching fraternity and users of social media.

Materials and Methods

The LS course is offered in selected autonomous colleges and the objective for offering the course is to enable the

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learners to gain knowledge, understanding and skills in LS based subject so that the learners can use them for developments in life. The LS course namely art from anything aims at to enable the learners to gain knowledge, understanding and skills in making art works from any available material. The acquiring of knowledge on art works, getting understanding on doing artworks and gaining skills in making artworks from the available material are the expected learning outcomes from this specified LS course.

In the present research work, the LS course namely art from anything was selected and the digital modules on the selected topics such as (i) introduction on art from anything, (ii) sculpture carvings, (iii) rubber castings, (iv) wall hangings and (v) origami were prepared. It is worth mentioning that each topic of these digital modules comprised text parts, pictorial parts and demonstration parts. While the text parts contained the verbal explanation of introduction, objective, materials required, methods adopted and expected outcome, the pictorial parts contained the drawings, pictures and photographs. The demonstration parts mainly contained videos for demonstration.¹ These digital modules were shared to the undergraduate students for the teaching and learning process of the art from anything – LS course offered by the Department of Visual communication, The American College (Autonomous), Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

In connection with the teaching and learning process of LS subject, the WhatsApp group with thirty under graduate students studying in the same college was formed. These students were from different disciplines like Tamil, English, Business Administration, Physical Education and Visual Communication. The prepared digital modules were posted systematically by the group admin to these students. These students could interact with group admin and also within the group not only through the direct phone calls but also through posting questions and getting clarified. In continuation, the attitudinal status, performance and practical skill of the participating students were evaluated.

The researcher conducted two tests through the social media for assessing the attitudinal status and academic performance of the selected under graduate students.³ In addition, the researcher conducted the third test for assessing the skills gained by the selected under graduate students after giving them face-to-face demonstration and hands on experiences on practical's in the class rooms. The first test was related to attitudinal assessment, whereas the second test was related to the performance assessment. The first test had the questionnaire with 10 questions and it was developed on a four-point Likert type scale response of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The second test was related to an assessment pertaining to knowledge and understanding in the subject and it had the questionnaire that consisted of thirty multiple choice questions with four response type options with only one correct answer.⁹ The third test was related to an assessment pertaining to the gained skills in the subject and it was assessed on the basis of realistic performance of student participants on anyone of the practical's on sculpture carvings, rubber castings, wall hangings and origami conducted in class room. All these three tests were conducted and the attitudinal status, academic performance of the students and practical skills of the student participants were assessed.

Results, Discussion and Conclusion

In the present research investigation, the practicability of WhatsApp as an educational tool in the teaching and learning process of art from anything was assessed. In addition, the achievability of WhatsApp in the teaching and learning process on the basis of the academic performance of chosen undergraduate students in an urban college was assessed. Finally, the skill gained by the student participants was also assessed. While the Table 1 presents the profile of student respondents, the Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 present the attitudinal status, results of academic assessment and results of skill assessment of the same student respondents.

Table 1. Profile of student respondents

Profile	Description
Age	19 years
Academic level	B.A or B.Sc., Second year
Academic course	Tamil, English, Business Administration, Physical Education and Visual Communication
Category of students	Urban students
Mostly used social media	WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter
Purposes for using social media	Communication, Entertainment and sharing of information
Average time spent	One hour daily
Average years of usage	Three years

Table 2. Attitudinal status of student respondents

Statements	Response (%)			
	A	SA	DA	SDA
Learning through social media is easy	70	30		
Learning through social media is exciting	70	30		
Learning through social media is effective	80	20		
Digital module has suitable texts, photos and videos	60	40		
Digital module is delivered in time	60	40		
Digital module is self-explanatory and it is easy to learn	60	40		
Digital module has social relevance and it is useful to learners	50	50		
Performance can be assessed by subjective questions			60	40
Evaluation of gained skills can be evaluated through social media			20	80
WhatsApp is an opt tool to teach LS course	70	30		

Table 3. Results of academic performance test

Profile of student respondents	Marks
Minimum	64.0%
Maximum	80.0%
Average	71.0%
Standard deviation	4.95

Table 4. Results of practical skill test

Profile of student respondents	Marks
Minimum	60.0%
Maximum	76.0%
Average	67.5%
Standard deviation	5.73

In the present investigation, a group in WhatsApp was specifically created with thirty under graduate students from the major disciplines of Tamil, English, Business Administration, Physical Education and Visual Communication. A total of five digital modules exclusively on Introduction on art from anything, sculpture carvings, rubber castings, wall hangings and origami were posted from time to time to them. The students in the group interacted with each other in order to share their knowledge and understanding that acquired through the digital modules. They also interacted with the group admin for getting their doubts clarified. In continuation, their academic performance in the LS subject of art from anything was assessed. In addition, the student participants were given a demonstration of sculpture carvings, rubber castings, wall hangings and origami in the classroom. They were also given hands on experience in making these sculpture carvings, rubber castings, wall hangings and origami. At final, their practical skill in the LS subject of art from anything was assessed.

As the selected group was second year undergraduate students, their age was mostly 19. They had urban background and so they had good experiences in using the social media like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter for communication, entertainment and sharing current affairs. They had good expertise in using social media due to their practice in the past three continuous years in social media with an average practice of one hour per day. It was observed that the student participants mostly used the social media for communication, entertainment and sharing of information. It was also observed that the student participants frequently used the social media for academic purposes.⁷

The WhatsApp was selected as a tool to teaching and learning process due to its specialties like easiness for usage, feasibilities to chat and group chat, facilities to send and receive the multimedia messages, quickness in updating the status and uploads of photos, great speed and elimination of geographic constraints for the existence of sender and

receiver.^{4,8} The urban students were selected due to their affordability to smart phones, continuous exposure in the usage of social media and continual utilization of social networking tools to communicate with their friends and relatives.⁶ The LS subject was specifically selected for the teaching learning process due to the availability of limited theory part in the educational content of LS syllabus, availability of easy practical in the educational content of LS syllabus and heterogeneous nature of student community involved in learning the LS subject.⁵

The attitudinal status of the students was assessed through the questionnaire method. In this assessment, the selected group of students specifically stated that the learning through social media was easy, exciting and effective. They also specifically stated that the digital modules were observed to be easy to learn, self-explanatory and they had opted texts, drawings, pictures, photographs and videos.² The feedback by the students revealed that the digital modules were delivered systematically and the doubts were clarified thoroughly to them. It was also revealed that the digital modules contained application oriented materials and they were beneficial to them.

The knowledge and understanding obtained by the students was assessed through objective questions and the performance was evaluated. The performance based results showed that the academic performance scores of the students varied from 64.0% and 80.0% with an average of 71.0%. The performance based results also showed that the academic performance scores of the students had the standard deviation of 4.95. The skill gained by the students was assessed through practical test in class room and the skill of the student participants was evaluated. The skill based results showed that the skill scores of the students varied from 60.0% and 76.0% with an average of 67.5%. The skill based results also showed that the skill scores of the students had the standard deviation of 5.73. These test results could be correlated with the knowledge and understanding gained by the student participants in the theory part of LS subject through the digital modules that were communicated by means of social media. These test results could also be correlated with the skills gained by the student participants in the practical part of LS subject through the video demonstration in digital module, face-to-face demonstration in contact class and also hands on experience of student participants in class room. It would be worth mentioning here that all the student participants invariably opined that the social media would be effectively used in the teaching learning process of LS subjects. All the student participants also invariably opined that the practical sessions should be separately conducted in class rooms as

part of the teaching learning process of LS based subjects.

As these were constructive connection among LS based digital module, learning through social media and performance of student community, it could be concluded that the social media would be effectively used in the teaching learning process of LS subjects especially for the benefit of student community.

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