Chapter 7

Teacher–Student Relationship in the Facebook Era

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of social networking sites has facilitated new modes of teacher-student communication, conveying the potential of changing teacher-students interaction. The goal of this chapter is to examine students' and teachers' perceptions of student-teacher SNS-based relationships in the Facebook era and to supply evidence that supports decision making. The authors present two studies involving secondary school Israeli students and teachers, examining the relations between Facebook-based student-teacher communication and student-teacher relationships. Findings suggest that Facebook communication may be beneficial but highlight conflicting issues. The authors discuss the implications of these studies, offering recommendations that include comprehensive support of teachers in developing new ICT literacies. They recommend further research as a means of providing educational policymakers and stakeholders with evidence to assist with informed decision making, as well as a means to empower teachers by allowing them to make decisions based on their educational beliefs.

EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM CHANGES IN THE KNOWLEDGE ERA: INTRODUCTION TO SNS IN EDUCATION

Throughout human history, knowledge was the driving wheel behind societies. In the modern, post-industrial society, many consider knowledge to be the single most valuable commodity (cf. Bell, 1976; Masuda, 1980). Indeed, in the 1990s, the phrase for describing the changing society was altered from "information society" to "knowledge society", focusing on ideas rather than on explosion of information, hence shifting attention to 21st century skills for gaining knowledge. To this day, the two concepts – information society and knowledge society – tend not to be differentiated (Anderson, 2008). Information and communication technologies are key issues in the transformation of society. Specifically, the growing usage

and popularity of Web 2.0 applications created new modes of collaboration and communication (Cheung & Lee, 2010), thereby facilitating social change (Olson, 1994). Still, with regards to the knowledge society, fundamental change have occurred in the past few decades; hence, change is not only in terms of amount or scope, but rather fundamental, causing transformation and vast implications on all aspects of our lives (Mioduser, Nachmias & Forkosh-Baruch, 2008). Within the realm of social media, several fundamental issues arise, related to, e.g., self-exposure, intimacy, and self-expression (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Livingstone, 2008; Lowenthal, 2009; Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

The knowledge era challenges society with a paradigm shift, setting demands for new tools and skills. According to Simon (1996), the world is becoming more complex. New paradigms emerged as a result of lifelong learning, emphasizing self-directed learning, constructivism and constructionism, emphasizing collaboration and social learning. Furthermore, new literacies are offered for the information age (cf. Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004; Mioduser, Nachmias & Forkosh-Baruch, 2008). Previous paradigms may not be relevant any more when new concepts emerge. With regards to education, we encounter new pedagogical paradigms, e.g., new assumptions, concepts and practices that shape our views of reality. New paradigms emerge when a current paradigm cannot meet demands of society (Brummelhuis & Kuiper, 2008). Such a fundamental change is considered a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1970).

The emergence of Web 2.0 applications created a growing population of collaborators worldwide, interacting and communicating beyond boundaries of time and space. This facilitated the creation of new types of interfaces, i.e., online social networks, where the users are at the center of the knowledge creation, rather than information (Chueng & Lee, 2010). Hence, a new paradigm emerged:

the creation of networks of people worldwide, for educational as well as social purposes.

Teachers, as well as educational systems at large, can benefit from these changes by facilitating contemporary educational paradigms (Abbott, 2005), allowing teachers to "[engage] in an authentic relationship with students where teachers know and respond with intelligence and compassion to students and their learning" (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). This pattern of teacher-student communication challenges traditional paradigms in which communication is limited and based on traditional teacher-student relationship and roles.

Hence, the evolving knowledge society and the emergence of information and communication technologies into our lives present complex challenges to educators and policymakers worldwide. Education requires adjustment to these changes in learning and teaching (e.g., the emergence of self-driven lifelong learning), in the shattering of boundaries (e.g., massive open online courses – MOOCs – as a new mode of distance education), as well as new meaning to emerging educational paradigms (e.g., constructivism, project based learning) (Brown & Adler, 2008). Schools, as a result, are prone to changes in the information era, as are all realms of our life, e.g., business or governance. Time and space boundaries are blurring and the information flow is constantly growing; this challenges teachers' role as educators in 21st century Web-based education, creating potential for advanced teacher-student collaboration, cooperation, and connection in ways unfamiliar to traditional education (UNESCO, 2011).

However, some changes are difficult to adopt by educational policymakers as they dramatically challenge long-established norms and traditions. The emergence of *social networking sites*, one of the prominent building stones of the Web 2.0 era, is perhaps the most salient example of the need to address unfamiliar educational scenarios.

Social networking sites (SNS) are websites that enable their users to construct a public or semi-public profile and to build a personal inner

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