

Role of social networking for the education of gifted and talented students

Meenu¹

Abstract

All individuals have the ability to learn and attain self fulfillment; however, many children are at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential. Today, there is no problem more perplexing or frustrating than the situation in which a bright child cannot or will not perform at an academic level commensurate with his or her intellectual ability. The intellectual, emotional, and social development of gifted and talented students is often uneven. Gifted students need additional time to contemplate issues and material. Gifted children are fluent thinkers, able to generate possibilities, consequences, or related ideas. They are extremely curious about objects, ideas, situations, or events, takes the initiative in social situations, is popular with peers, is socially mature, is willing to take responsibility, synthesizes ideas from group members to formulate a plan of action. To utilize the brain more effectively, gifted students should be given the opportunity to process information. For this purpose social networking can be used. A social network is a cluster of people connected for a specific reason. The social networks we speak of today, such as facebook or MySpace, provide incredibly rich communication. Pictures, audio recordings, video recordings, and can be freely shared by anyone with a connection to the interest. Social networking will help the gifted child because in the regular classroom the gifted child may be the only such child in the room; hence, he or she will not have the opportunity to learn with others of like ability. Social networking can give the gifted children the broader base of communication for the different cultural background which may reduce the problem of isolation as there are often only a small number of such pupils in a class or even in a school. E-mail or conferencing systems can be used to link these children, so that they can exchange ideas and feel less isolated. So my paper focuses on the use of social networking for the learning of the gifted and talented students.

Keywords: Gifted and talented students, technology in gifted education and social networking.

1. Introduction:

When we are within our group of friends, we make a social network. A social networking service is an online service, platform, or a site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks. In the context of education, social networking sites offer a student the opportunity to network with other students, educators, administrators, both within and outside his current institution. A good example of a social network is our group of friends. We have common interests. These are all social behaviors, which are a basic part of every person. When an individual socializes, whether in person or online, he/she meets and develops relationships with others. According to Ryan (2011), although you may not know it, you use social networks almost every day. Because everyone else around you is also a social network. To the average users, a social network is a simple application that lives within our desktop or web browser. It consists of a

¹ Research Scholar(JRF), Department of Education, Panjab University, Chandigarh
E-mail: meenu.chandla87@gmail.com; Contact no. 8284937424

time we go-in page, a user account, a profile, and a bunch of games and tools to make the time we spend with our friends fun. However, there is a lot of sophisticated hardware and software that must constantly run to enable these applications to function. The people who use social networks are called users, and the social network themselves are applications. Applications can exist in several forms. Some, like facebook, are browser-based applications. Some applications, like Twitter's messaging client, exists as installed programmes on your called client based applications. This means that although you are in the United States, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Denmark or India. Not only will you make new friends, but you just might learn a thing or two about new cultures or new languages and learning is always a good thing. The primary function of social networking sites is to provide ways for an individual to make connections with others.

2. Who are gifted students?

Giftedness is an intellectual exceptionality. It is an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated (LaFrance, 1997). Gifted children have special learning needs, which if not met, can lead to frustration, a loss of self-esteem, boredom, laziness and underachievement (Crocker, 2004). If the gifted child is not recognized, he or she quickly becomes bored and disinterested with the content taught.

Table 1: Showing the distribution of Intelligence Quotient

| Terman's classification | | Wechsler's classification | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| IQ range | IQ classification | IQ range | IQ classification |
| 164 and over | Genius or near genius | 128 and over | Very superior |
| 148-164 | Very superior intelligence | 120-127 | Superior intelligence |
| 132-148 | Superior intelligence | 111-119 | Bright normal intelligence |
| 113-132 | Above average intelligence | 91-110 | Average intelligence |
| 84-113 | Normal/average intelligence | 80-90 | Dull normal intelligence |
| 68-84 | Dullness | 66-89 | Borderline intelligence |
| 52-68 | Borderline deficiency | 65 and below | Defective intelligence |
| Below 52 | Definite feeble-mindedness | | |

Source:<http://www.google.co.in/imgres?imgurl=http://www.kidsiqtestcenter.com/img/iqscores1.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.kidsiqtestcenter.com/meaning-of-IQ-scores>.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2013), there are three ways of educating children who are intellectually and academically more advanced than their peers: (1) acceleration, whereby the gifted child is allowed to learn material at a more rapid pace or is promoted more rapidly through grades; (2) enrichment, whereby the gifted child works through the usual grades at the usual pace but with a curriculum supplemented by a variety of cultural activities; and (3) differentiation, whereby gifted children are accelerated or enriched within the regular classroom. Special schools or classes enable gifted children to progress at an accelerated pace. It means that gifted students need some extra work instead of their curriculum. The three ways of educating gifted children can be enhanced by using the social networking and will support gifted students in the regular classroom.

3. Benefits of technology in gifted education

Gifted students require learning to motivate and challenge them, as well as support their learning styles and needs. Approximately 15% of gifted students have learning disabilities

and require assistive technology and it is believed 20-50% of gifted students are underachievers (Weber & Cavanaugh, 2006). The integration of educational technologies can support these students, as well as other gifted students. Delivering content in creative ways to maximize student learning and determining how they know is the main ingredient of teaching. Teacher should use the cloud services like Dropbox or Google Drive are great examples. These services are free and they are easy to use. Students should be taught how to collaborate using wikis, Google Docs, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, or Google Docs. All of these allow for interaction between students in and outside of the classroom. Gifted students need to know that learning isn't confined to a classroom. It can be anywhere.

According to McFarlane (2011), although often overlooked by many educators, social networking provides gifted students with a previously unavailable network of gifted students, educators and experts. Gifted student networks are found on various social networks, however one of the largest groups is the Gifted Kids Network. This network provides opportunities for students, parents and teachers to connect and find resources. As well, they provide online classes for students, technology tools and the latest trends. Social networks alleviate the isolated and frustrated feelings so often felt by gifted students. Selwyn (2009) claims that social networking may “benefit learners by allowing them to enter new networks of collaborative learning, based around interests and affinities not catered for in their immediate educational environment.” Klein (2013) quote about the International Gateway for Gifted Youth (IGGY), a social network that is designed for brainy teens between the ages of 13 and 18 has recently reached more than 2,500 members. The purpose of Iggy (International Gateway for gifted youth), which was created in 2011, is to “help gifted young people ... [realize] their full potential,” . Thus, social networking sites may provide a forum for extending the traditional classroom and enabling users to join groups that match individual educational interests.

4. Social networking as a communication tools

Gifted students are often starved for relationships with academic peers. In smaller schools, gifted students may be genuinely unable to find even one true academic peer with similar interests. In contrast, technology provides students like these with opportunities to connect and communicate with others (from anywhere around the globe) who share their interests and abilities.



Source: talentsfromindia.com

5. Twitter in the classroom

According to Wagner (2012) Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People write short updates, often called "tweets" of 140 characters or less. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search. Twitter's functions have several educational implications. Twitter has become a powerful tool for anyone wanting to quickly share and receive information in a friendly environment: community organizers, marketers, politicians, celebrities, and educators. According to Fitton, Gruen and Poston (2009), "Twitter connects a wildly diverse array of people from all over the world, erasing barriers and boundaries all the way." The potential for educators to capitalize on this new way of connecting with people locally and worldwide is boundless. Teachers are able to share resources, ideas, questions, and challenges in a manner that is interactive allowing participants to learn by doing. If the user does not find the response useful, it can be disregarded and the next reply can be considered.

According to Slifer (Education Management Professional) wrote in "How to use Twitter in the classroom" that I have used twitter for 2 reasons:

1. I have used twitter in the classroom as a teacher, is to tweet the homework assignment.
2. To have the students reply to me in the target language.

Teacher should tell the students to reply to the answer to an open ended response that was personalized. He/she should have conversation with students so that all students can see responses and ideas. Teacher should also reply to student's questions about things in class if they were to be confused or miss class. Teachers can use twitter to connect with the school community and parents. Teacher can also tweet the weekly assignments at the elementary level to keep the parents involved (Slifer, n.d.). Some of the other benefits of Twitter are:

5.1 World Connections

The live, real-time nature of Twitter allows us to get live updates as world events are happening, however, major media outlets like BBC etc. are now "using Twitter to deliver news and programming information." Tracking the tweets regarding a world event give the gifted students the most current, grass roots information available. The use of Twitter gives students the opportunity to connect with real authors, experts, and other professionals. For example, in addition to having a Web site or Facebook page, authors are also using Twitter "to reach followers...in an instant without the time investment of posting to a blog".

5.2 Take and share notes

Classrooms with enough resources can allow students to tweet their own notes during lessons and share with their peers. By doing so gifted students will engage in this activity which will help themselves as well as for average students.

5.3 Post math puzzles

Math, chemistry or physics teachers need not feel left out from playing games and posting teasers on Twitter. Like their literate contemporaries, they can microblog a daily problem for students to solve and tweet back the answer (Miller, n.d.).

6. Collaborative documents on web

Online documents are the easiest and most important way to collaborate. Google has taken a lead by providing free collaborative services in the form of the google docs (<http://docs.google.com>). google docs is a user friendly suite of online collaborative tools that come with tremendous potential for use in the classroom. Users of google docs can import, create, edit and update documents and spreadsheets in various fonts and file formats,

combining text with formulas, lists, tables and images. Google docs are compatible with most presentation software and word processors. Work can be published as a web page or as a print-ready manuscript. This is perhaps the easiest way where multiple users can edit and work on the same document at the same time (Kumar & Manjulata, 2012). John Miller came up with the idea of using a google form to collect assignments. Here are the teachers create and publish a google form to be used as an In Box. When it's time to turn in a google doc, students complete the simple form and submit a link to their google doc. The information submitted by students automatically populates a spreadsheet to be used by teachers to keep track of assignments and also to quickly access those assignments for grading and review (Oxnevad, 2012).

When a teacher chooses to share a document through google docs with the intellectually gifted students, he/she gets to decide how much access that the students has to the document. Google docs has the following functions which can be used by a teacher:

Can edit - If the teacher will choose this option, then the students will able to make changes to the document. This is good for group work, where several students are collaborating on the project. So, the teacher should give the project work to the gifted students by using google docs.

Can comment - If teacher choose this, then the students will not be able to edit the document, but they will be able to leave comments in the document. These comments will not print out with the document, but will be visible on screen. This is useful for peer review, such as when a student needs another student to read their work and leave comments on it. By doing this the creativity and giftedness can be nurtured. This is also a good fit when turning in an assignment to a teacher, if the teacher just needs to leave feedback and grading information as comments (Curts, 2012).

Teacher's role:

- **Create a classroom website:** create a site for your class, embed a class calande , videos and presentations.
- **Google talk:** invite a guest lecture into your classroom to do a guest lecture through video chat.
- **Google groups:** teacher should create classroom placement groups to better distribute differentiated materials and resources. Groups also encourage discussions among peers.
- **Create parent support groups:** create groups for parents so that they can easily communicate with each other and share news and updates.

7. Mobile learning

Mobile phones are the most powerful, effective and economical mode of communication. The technological development in the field of mobile phones makes it feel that entire world is in your hand. It almost ensures across the board communication. Unlike computers, where socioeconomic factors created a wide digital divide that hindered access, cell phones are more affordable and may narrow the divide. Teens from low-income homes where a computer may not be present are more likely to use their phones to access the internet. Studies of Japanese college students, find that learning gains for vocabulary are greater when students receive regular emails via mobile phone, compared to those who access the vocabulary lessons on the Web via the PC (Thornton & Houser, 2005). In a study of Taiwanese students attempting to learn English, students were randomly assigned to receive their vocabulary lessons as text messages on their mobile phones, or on paper. Post-test scores for the group using mobile phones were significantly better (Lu, 2008). So, the students who have the higher intellectual ability but poor in vocabulary can take benefit from the mobile learning. Hung, Hwang, Lin, & Su (2012) conducted a study on 27 gifted students and 63 average students from 4 and 5th grades. The results revealed that the gifted students

performed significantly better than the average students in Science Inquiry Literacy Assessment (SILA) and perceived usefulness of the mobile devices. The preliminary validities of perceived usefulness ratings also looked more promising for the gifted students than those for the average students.

8. Blog

A **blog** (a contraction of the words *web log*) is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web and consisting of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first) (wiki, 2013). A majority is interactive; allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other via GUI widgets on the blogs, and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites. In that sense, blogging can be seen as a form of social networking. Indeed, bloggers do not only produce content to post on their blogs, but also build social relations with their readers and other bloggers. According to Kharbach (2012), "A blog is a personal website that contains content organized like a journal or a diary. Each entry is dated, and the entries are displayed on the web page in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent entry is posted at the top. Readers catch up with blogs by starting at the top and reading down until they encounter material they've already read." Using a blog makes learning independent of time and place. It gets students engaged and boosts their motivation. It gives students a genuine and potentially worldwide audience for their work. It gives a chance to shy students to participate with their peers and get their voice heard which will contribute to identity-formation among gifted students. Here are some ways on how teachers can help the gifted students by using the blogs in their classrooms:

8.1 Blog daily language and math activities:

Teacher can blog daily language and math activities for gifted students and frequently ask students to keep a personal journal where they complete short, daily activities such as proofreading several sentences or solving review math problems. These activities can be taken online by posting them as prompts in a group blog and then having students post their work as replies.

8.2 Create a blog tutorial:

As the gifted students are very challenging so, teacher should challenge the students to write, record, and post an online tutorial explaining to their parents how to use the blog.

8.3 Create a blog for gifted students for problem solving:

Assess and monitor your upper elementary students' problem-solving skills using a special blog you create for this purpose. Post a weekly challenge, like a riddle or brainteaser that requires your students to think creatively in order to find a solution. Ask students to post their solutions on the blog and then discuss the solutions with the whole class at the end of the week. Each week's post and comments will be saved in the blog archive for later reference. Expand this activity by inviting students to find and share challenges with the rest of the class. This special purpose blog can be linked to general classroom blog for easy access (Lisa, 2012).

8.4 Peer learning:

Use blogs for peer learning. Get students to read their colleagues writings and underline spelling and grammatical mistakes. Use blogs for classroom projects where students can include videos, clips, audio, text and images.

8.5 Classroom news:

Use a section in your blog for classroom news where to communicate the general classroom news. Work with students to identify the kinds of information they would like to share with their parents, then engage them in writing and posting daily or weekly news updates (Kharbach, 2012).

9. Skype:

Skype is an IP telephony service provider that offers free calling between subscribers and low-cost calling to people who don't use the service. In addition to standard telephone calls, Skype enables file transfers, texting, video chat and video conferencing. The service is available for desktop computers, notebook and tablet computers and other mobile devices, including mobile phones. A number of companies, including Skype, produce dedicated Skype phones (Rouse, 2009). Skype is a communications software whose purpose is to break down barriers to communication. With an Internet-connected device, families, friends and colleagues can get together for free with messaging, voice and video. At low cost, they can also call landlines or mobiles virtually anywhere in the world. Skype has recently introduced group video, allowing groups of more than two people to do things together whenever they're apart (Wyman, 2012). According to Oxford Dictionaries (2013) Skype is to have a spoken conversation with (someone) over the Internet using the software application Skype, frequently also viewing by webcam. One of the biggest issues today in both gifted and regular education is underachievement. Concern with the problem of underachievement, especially among potentially high-achieving students, has increased substantially in recent years. As the gifted students displays unusual curiosity about many things and generates a large number of ideas and/or solutions to problems So, Skype can help the gifted students by following ways (Verlee, 2012):

9.1 Meet with other classrooms:

One of the most common projects educators utilize Skype for is setting up exchanges with classrooms around the world, usually for cultural exchange purposes or working together on a common assignment. The program's official site provides some great opportunities to meet up with like-minded teachers and students sharing the same goals.

9.2 Practice a foreign language:

Connect with individual learners or classrooms hailing from a different native tongue can use a Skype collaboration to sharpen grammar and pronunciation skills through conversation.

9.3 Hold a contest and debate:

Challenge other classrooms to a competition circling around any subject or skill imaginable, and work out a suitable prize ahead of time. Skype can also be used as a great forum for hosting formal and informal debates to help students with their critical thinking and research skills.

9.4 Meet with librarians:

Teachers and students alike who need some assistance with research or ask some questions about a specific book might want to consider hooking up a Skype link with the school library.

9.5 Meet the needs of twice exceptional children:

Skype allows the special education classroom to incorporate students of all ages and abilities into the conversation, and it works equally well as both a remote and a local tool.

9.6 Guest lecturers:

Many plugged-in professionals these days will gladly offer up special lectures and lessons to classrooms via Skype which will be helpful for the gifted learner.

10. Internet t-talk

The Internet T-talk is a strategy used to explore and discuss both sides of an important or controversial issue. This activity i.e. internet t-talk can be extended considerably for gifted students. Firstly, teacher should identify an issue or topic and motivate the gifted students to provide average students with basic background information related to the issue or topic by preparing themselves firstly. It also provides an opportunity for all students to express their ideas. Teacher should put the topic in the form of a dualistic statement that can be answered yes or no in relation to one's agreement. Pairs are formed and supporting ideas are found and recorded. The task is to work to come to a consensus on a new statement to which all or most can agree. Finally, students are asked to write their individual views and supporting reasons in a journal or learning log or the whole class can use this information as the basis for further discussion.

11. Facebook

Facebook is the world's most popular social networking website. It makes it easy for you to connect and share with your family and friends online. Facebook has even helped the web become more open and social. Originally designed for college students, Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg while he was enrolled at Harvard University. By 2006, however, anyone over the age of 13 with a valid email address could join Facebook. Today, Facebook is the world's largest social network, with over a billion users worldwide (What is Facebook?). According to Pollara and Zhu (2011), the acceptance of Facebook by school-aged users is evident, but the potential of using social networking sites for educational purposes is still being debated. Results indicate that the use of Facebook positively affected the relationships between mentors and mentees. Students believed that they learned more by using Facebook and would like to use Facebook for other educational purposes. Educators are concerned that the use of sites like Facebook may negatively affect academic performance. A recent study showed that students who spent more time on Facebook spent less time studying and had lower GPAs (Karpinski and Duberstein, 2009).

12. Online and virtual classroom systems:

Being gifted somehow means they have to excel at everything. If they don't, if they don't master something on the first attempt, they think they have failed. Failure means they aren't gifted, at least in their minds. This attitude, left unchecked, develops into perfectionism. That can lead to an unwillingness to take academic risks, which then leads to underperformance (Shaughnessy, 2011). To overcome this problem online learning and virtual classrooms can be used to engage gifted students. Online learning is a teaching method in which students interact with a program via the internet and may have email access to an instructor. In the virtual classroom, students connect to the class, at a pre-established time, via the internet. The virtual classroom gives students with an electronic forum in which they can verbally interact with instructors and other students. The limited number of teachers and the excellent online and virtual classroom programs now available demands that new methods and tools for teaching be utilized, and a new vision of education be cultivated (Online and Virtual Classroom Learning, n.d.). Local schools cannot always provide gifted and talented students with the courses they need. In some cases, gifted students may wish to enroll in more than the traditional six or seven courses allowed each semester. Students who

are successful online are actively engaged, curious, focused, flexible, and highly motivated. Educators and parents cannot assume that all gifted and talented students have the necessary technological, time-management, and study skills necessary to be successful online (Siegle, 2005). According to Enache and Crisan (2013), Online classes help the gifted students because: The student explores, selects, creates, builds, communicates and develops social and professional skills that are useful in information society. Students communicate in writing, in English, with their peers, teachers or native speakers. These offers gifted students access to additional sources of documentation and allows communication with scientists in the field.

13. Edusat

Government of India launched the Educational Satellite (EDUSAT) in September 2004, which is expected to revolutionize the Distance Education Programmes in the country. The launch of EDUSAT has helped in providing quality instruction through video programmes to students studying in the interior villages. The students have benefited from the video programmes delivered through the Satellite. The benefit gained is in terms of gain in knowledge and understanding of the content, improvement in attendance and holding attention and interest in viewing programmes. The teacher involvement during the broadcast as facilitator and conduct of Pre and Post broadcast activity is note worthy (Bhandigadi).

14. Conclusion

In conclusion, if we are expecting our gifted students to lead and succeed in the 21st century then we need to give them real life, engaging and diverse experiences along with the skills needed. There needs to be some choice in their learning. Gifted students need to be given the opportunity to see there is more than one solution, and more than one way to get an answer for a project. We need to teach our gifted students to communicate. In our society, communication is important. They should be encouraged to blog, create Youtube videos, or podcasts using Voicethread. Interaction with a real audience is important. Most social network services are web-based and provide a means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. It gives real feedback. That's where real learning is experienced. So, we need to not only teach our students how to use technology we need to teach them how to use them in the context of learning. Use social networks to work together with gifted and talented (G&T) pupils as the social networks can be really important. It opens up an anytime and place collaborative tool. Students and teachers can also share resources. Schools need to teach more Computer Science. This really appeals to many gifted & talented children.

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