Distance Learning and Facebook's Usage in the Study Process: Students' Attitude

Vilmantė Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė

Abstract—**Distance learning is the most rapidly developing field in specialists' preparation. This system allows people to learn at the most appropriate time and rate without moving from their living or working place. Y and Z generations are depended on ICT, therefore they pay on prior to use computers and other ITC means in all fields of their life. Social networks became very popular among people to communicate. Therefore they also could be involved in to study process. Results of student's attitude to distance learning and facebook usage in the study process are presented in this paper.**

Index Terms—**Distance education, facebook, ICT, study process.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Use of the computer increased markedly in the last decade of the twentieth century. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was created in hopes to help people communicate more efficiently and effectively in all part of life such as communication between people, commerce, politics, health, career, and studies. Information society is a new way to live and work together. The first priority in education is to prepare people to integrate into information society by giving them the right to continuous learning. For all education participants, both teachers and students, ICT helps to provide a huge and various knowledge as well as up to date and easily accessible in a relatively rapid and in some cases even is free of charge [1]. Distance studies are inevitably linked with modern learning surroundings. Information technologies and virtual learning environment play the most important role in distance learning.

There are many studies of ICT and Facebook usage. Some results of these studies are presented in this paper. However, even distance education and Facebook is on top of interest among researches it still needs more studies about their implementation in to study process seeking positive effect. The purpose of this paper is to analyse students' attitudes for distance education and Facebook usage in the study process in Lithuania and to present changes of this attitude in two years.

Methods of the research are analysis and synthesis of the scientific literature and comparison of two empirical studies.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. ICT Usage in the Study Process

Information and communication technology includes a wide range of approaches to teaching based on various traditional and innovative instructional. The effectiveness of ICT in education is demonstrated by the achievement of communication objectives, while efficiency is showed by saving cost, time and effort. Most of the discussions state that the potential benefits of ICT-based teaching and learning strategies, based on the following two propositions: (1) ICT offers economic efficiency for the organization of education and the academic community, (2) ICT is able to generalize students, enabling the institution to accommodate individual differences such as goal learning, teaching style, comfort learning for both students or university anytime and anywhere [1]. One of the possible techniques of ICT possible to use for studies is social sites and networking. Various factors contribute towards the use of social media for educational purposes. A motivating factor for popularity of social networking sites among young consumers is that the social networking site provides users with more flexibility and freedom to express their feelings [2].

B. Distance Education's Possibilities

Distance learning as a form of open learning is oriented to disseminating knowledge and presenting freedom to what and how to study, i.e. this form of education develops personality and ability to think critically.

Distance education is the relationship based on a dialogue, structure, and independent decisions and mediating technologies [3]. This is an educational modality that is currently undergoing a boom in Europe as well as in the rest of the world. For example, at present, there are some 190 private institutions in the DE business in Germany. This is due, among other reasons, to the fact that traditional educational modalities encounter problems when addressing current needs. Such needs are characterized by an increase in the request for more diversity of courses, the difficulty students have in attending regularly a centre and the expansion of higher education. All of these factors are in turn aggravated by the ephemera nature of the information taught in the courses.

Distance education is characterized by the following distinctions [4]:
- Separation of the teacher and student;
- Influence of an education institution on planning and preparing learning materials;
- Use of technical and information technologies; double-way communication; the possibility of unplanned

seminars;
- Participation in applying the most technically developed education.

Having analysed distance-learning distinction, it is possible to highlight its advantages and disadvantages [5], which is given in Table I.

TABLE I: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Possibility to get engaged into lifelong learning and develop irrespective of time and place. • Possibility to learn at a learner's pace and according to his/her abilities and demands. • Learning expenses are reduced. • Teaching material is easier understood using multiple terrains. • More rapid innovations and achievements dissemination. • Cooperation among different institutions in managing studies, common projects, research.	• Studies based on contemporary technologies require considerable investments. • Creation of modern means is expenditure-consuming. • Not all students afford to use a computer and the Internet. • There can arise technological incompatibility. • Teachers' positive approach to distance education, adequate knowledge and qualification is a must. • New technologies require computer literacy, foreign languages. • Lack of social contacts.

C. Facebook in the Study Process

Facebook is generally considered the leading social networking site used by college students [6]-[8]. It serves not only as a primary tool of communication but also electronic socialization. As of the first quarter 2014, Facebook had 1.28 billion monthly active users [9].

Hew [10] survey reported the use of Facebook was nearly ubiquitous among students in the USA, with over 90% participations among undergraduate students. Salaway et al. [11] affirm the same. Our studies showed that 57,7% in 2011 and 75,7% of students in 2013 had Facebook account in Lithuania.

Many research studies related to the use of Facebook by students and their usage for study process:

- Hussain's [12] research showed that from 538 interviewed students in Pakistan 90 percent of respondents have Facebook's account and 82 percent of them use Facebook every day. 76 percent of respondents use Social Media for learning.
- Study [13] revealed 15 percent of respondent in Jaddah prefer social media as communication method for information on lecture locations. Comparing Facebook with Twitter, Google+ and others 70 percent of the same respondents' selected Facebook as preferred social media for communication. 70% of the students chose Facebook as the best platform for sharing knowledge and information between students and the department, 16% chose Twitter, 13% Google+ and 1% others.
- The use of Facebook helped to improve the learning achievements. It also helped to expand students' perspectives and to show them the need for lifelong learning in that subject. The creation of the Facebook group had a positive impact in the teambuilding of the group [14].
- Stutzman [7] found 90% of undergraduates had reported using FB as compared to 22% of graduates/professional students.
- Selwyn [15] provides just only 4% of a total of 68,169 Wall postings were related to education-use. He also found no significant difference in terms of education-related Facebook activity by students' gender, year of study or assessment marks.
- Bosch [16] found in his study that students used FB for academic purposes to share ideas about projects and lecture/study notes, to inform lecturers which topics they would prefer an instructor to cover.

- Facebook is the most popular social network site, used by 89.3% of the undergraduate students. Half of students who use social network sites do so to communicate with classmates about course- related topics, only 5.5% use them to communicate with instructors about course-related topics [11]. Most students (85.5%) reported that they had never used FB to communicate with an instructor. Few students reported using FB for school tasks [17].
- Kumpikaite *et al.* [18] based on their study in Lithuania stated that 70.4% of respondents are not willing to communicate with professors a lot throw Facebook and to have them as friends in this social network. Most students are using social networking in daily life (Mean 4.09 from 5) while usage of social networking in study process is much more lower (Mean 3.27).

Summarizing, we can say that the trend of using social media among university students seems to be increasing day by day and a large not just for interactions and communication but a number of them is relying on its usage for studies.

III. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

This study aims to research Lithuanian students' attitudes to ICT usage. The main purpose of this survey was to find out students' opinion and their ICT use in study process and to compare its results with previous provided study. Questionnaire was prepared based on scientific literature analysis and was provided in Internet.

5 point scale was used for evaluation. 5 means using social networks every day; 1-never at all. Calculated statistical means were used for the analysis of data in this paper. The 1st survey was provided in April – May of 2011, the 2nd one in November – December of 2013. 490 underground university students (78.4% females) participated in the 1st poll and 101 (79.6% females) in the 2nd poll. All students were studying Economics, Management and Finance in Lithuania.

Looking at literature review and earlier researches in this study we tried to find out:

1) With what kind of problems do students face studying in regular way?
2) For what reasons do students use ICT in daily life?
3) How often students do use Social Networking in their daily life and in study process in scale of 5?
4) Students' opinion on communicating with students and

professors in Facebook and posting study material in this Social network.

IV. STUDY RESULTS

At the beginning the respondents have been asked about the problems they face while studying traditionally. Fig. 1 presents these results.

It is obvious that the most serious problem is the co-ordination of the schedule. Comparing these indices according to the parts of studies, it becomes clear that the problem of adjusting studies and work is rather acute for the day-time students (46.8%) and evening department students (14.3%). The students of the evening department are especially worried about the rate of studies. This is very important for 28.6% of the evening department students and 22.2% of the day-time students. Only 13.4% of respondents do not face any problems in traditional studies.

Looking for computer use in their daily life among explored students results were following (see Table II).
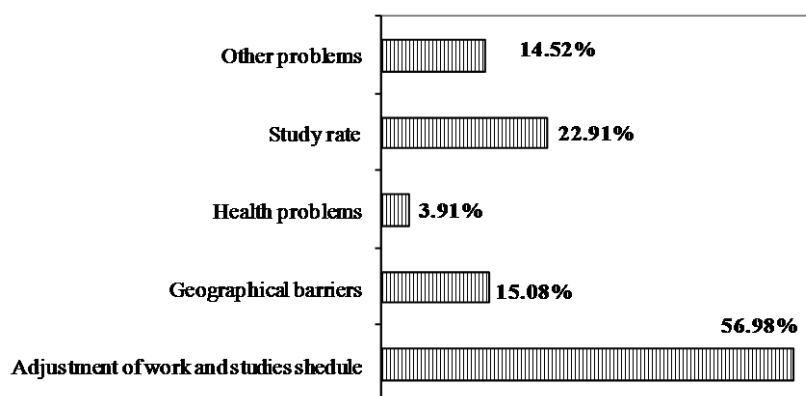

Fig. 1. Problems faced by the students.

TABLE II: REASONS OF ICT USAGE IN PERCENT

Reason of computer usage	2011	2013
E-mail, Skype, MSN etc. for communication	76.8	74.8
Information sourcing	70.9	76.7
Socialization (Facebook, MySpace etc.)	57.7	75.7
For studies	52.9	53.4
For work	36.6	24.3
For entertainment	28.0	35.9
For electronic services (e-banking, shopping etc.)	18.9	15.5

TABLE III: COMPARISON OF SOCIAL NETWORKING IN DAILY LIFE AND STUDY PROCESS

	Social networking for daily life in Facebook		Social networking for studies in Facebook	
	2011	**2013**	**2011**	**2013**
Undegrad. 1	4,3	4,4	3,6	4,2
Undegrad. 2	4	4,7	3,3	4,3
Undegrad. 3	4,1	4,7	3,2	4
Undegrad. 4	4	4,1	2,8	2,9

We see that students started to search information every day more often in 2013. It changed from 70.9 percent in 2011 to 76.7 percent in 2013. However the biggest changed is seen in Socialization. This percent changed from 57.7 percent in 2011 up to 75.7 percent in 2013. Computer's use for studies almost did not change.

Explored undergraduate students were also asked about using social networks in daily life and study process in 2011 and 2013. The results are shown in Table III. As we see from the results, the usage of social networks in daily life as well as in study process is decreasing for upper course students. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students are using Facebook and other means of social networks in study process more frequently than average. So it could be forecasted increasing importance of social networks in study process in future as it is in daily life among young generation now. Popularity of Facebook increased in both fields in 2013 comparing with 2011. It is not surprising as Facebook's popularity is growing in all the world. Therefore it started to be used more in study process as well.

Fig. 2 shows students' opinion about adding professors to Facebook friends.
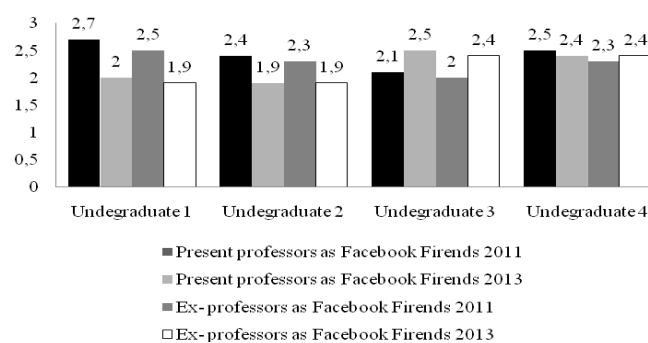

Fig. 2. Students' opinion about adding present and former professors to Facebook friends.

The most students disagree with this possibility. Comparing results according to years we see that 1st and 2nd year students are much less willing to have their professors as Facebook friends. These reasons stay not clear and need more deep analysis and studies.

Looking at connections among Social Networking in daily life and Facebook use, significant statistical differences were found (see Table IV).

TABLE IV: CORRELATIONS AMONG SOCIAL NETWORKING AND FRIENDSHIP

		Communication with professors about studies	Communication with other students about studies	Study information posting in Facebook
Social Networking in Facebook	Spearman Correlation Coefficient	,342(**)	,438(**)	,328(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000
	N	510	510	510

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results showed that students who use social networking more often are more positive about communication with professors and students for studies and study course information posting in Facebook.

V. CONCLUSION

Information communication technologies have introduced a new set of educational opportunities for educators and students. Contemporary higher education aims at conforming to the present requirements to be mass and open and satisfying the needs of the knowledge society. Information literacy is as a sub-category of independent learning, which, in turn, is a sub-set of lifelong learning. Distance studies have their advantages and disadvantages. However, it is necessary not only to evaluate the ratio of advantages and disadvantages, but to co-ordinate traditional and distance studies striving for the best variant in the sense of both studies quality and social and economic effectiveness.

Moreover when we speak about distance learning, we could think about unemployed people. There are many unemployed people in different countries. Eurostat [19] estimates that 25.471 million men and women in the EU28 were unemployed in April 2014. Compared with April 2013, unemployment fell by 1.167 million in the EU28 but it is still big. Unemployed people are looking for every possibility to get a job. Therefore they try to find ways to receive different certificates, diplomas, and to graduate courses. Different distance courses provided in various countries let unemployed people or people who want to get more knowledge to join these courses and not so rare even for free.

Speaking about Facebook, reviewed literature and provided studies showed increasing popularity of social media and Facebook in students' daily life. Stutzman [7] found 90% undergraduates use FB. This meets with our survey of 2013 where we found 92 % of our undergraduate students have FB account.

Summarizing we could state that Facebook should be implemented into study process in future decades. This is even more attractive ant comfortable when Facebook became connected with Skype. However explored Lithuanian students are quite critic and conservative about Facebook's using in the study process as use it more for leisure and disport at the moment, but from the other hand they prefer to use the same media for all purposes.

REFERENCES

[1] Y. Perbawaningsih, "Plus minus of ICT usage in higher education students," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 103, pp. 717–724, 2013.
[2] R. Shambare, R. Rugimbana, and N. Sithole, "The facebook phenomenon: Social networking among South African students," in *Proc. 13th IAABD Conference,* Edmonton, Canada, 2011.
[3] M. G. Moore *et al.*, "The effects of distance learning: A summary of the literature," Research Monograph No 2. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, American Center for the Study of Distance Education, 1990.
[4] D. Y. Keegan, *The Foundations of Distance Education*, London: Croom Helm, 1986.
[5] R. Ciarniene and V. Kumpikaite, "Developing knowledge society: New approach to managerial – economic preparation of specialists," *Engineering Economics*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 52-58, 2005.
[6] Educes, "7 things you should know about facebook," *Educause Learning Initiative*, 2006.
[7] F. Stutzman, "An evaluation of identity-sharing behavior in social network communities," *International Digital and Media Arts Journal,* vol. 3, no. 1, 2006.
[8] S. A. Golder, D. Wilkinson, and B. A. Huberman, "Rhythms of social interaction: Messaging within a massive online network," in *Proc. the Third Communities and Technologies Conference on Communities and technologies*, C. Steinfeld, B. T. Pentland, M. Ackerman, and N. Contractor, Ed., London: Springer-Verlag Limited, pp. 41–66, 2007.
[9] Facebook. Company timeline. [Online]. Available: http://www.Facebook.com/press/info.php?timeline
[10] K. F. Hew, "Students' and teachers' use of facebook," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 662-676, 2011.
[11] G. Salaway, R. Caruso, and M. R. Nelson, "The ECAR study of undegraduate students and information technologies," *Educause Center of Applied Research*, pp. 1-4, 2008.
[12] I. Hussain, "A study to evaluate the social media trends among university students," *Procedi. - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 64, pp. 639–645, 2012.
[13] M. A. Balubaid, "Using web 2.0 technology to enhance knowledge sharing in an academic department," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 102, pp. 406–420, 2013.
[14] O. D. Ortega, "Correlating students' performance with social networks use in teaching," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 93, pp. 1668–1672, 2013.
[15] N. Selwyn, "Faceworking: Exploring students' education-related use of facebook," *Learning, Media and Technology*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 157–174, 2009.
[16] T. E. Bosch, "Using online social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the university of Cape Town," *Communication: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 185-200, 2009.
[17] J. D. Ophus and J. T. Abbitt, "Exploring the potential perceptions of social networking systems in university courses," *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 639-648, 2009.
[18] V. Kumpikaitė, K. Duoba, and A. Taraškevičius, "Will such information technology as Facebook become regular mean for study process?" *International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research: 3rd International Conference on Advanced Management Science (IPEDR 2011)*, vol. 19, pp. 36-40, 2011.
[19] EUROSTAT. Euro area unemployment rate at 11.7%. [Online]. Available: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-03062014-BP/EN/3-03062014-BP-EN.PDF

Vilmantė Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė is a doctor of social sciences (management and administration). She gained her degree at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania in 2004.

She is a professor of the Department of Management of Faculty of Economics and Management at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania. She worked as an engineer and a consultant in "Telebaltikos konsultacija" in 1998 to 2002, and a director of "CET BALTICA" 2006-2010. She is an author and coauthor of more than 60 scientific publications. Her major fields of

scientific research include human resource development and its evaluation; modern teaching and learning methods; distance education; spirituality and moral values at work, and international migration processes.

She is a professor of Management Department at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania. She is the author and coauthor of more than 70 scientific publications and textbooks, member of different societies (as IEDRC, AOM, EURAM, SASE, IABE), member of conferences' scientific boards, a member of editorial board of scientific journals "Economics and Management" and "Journal of Management and Change", participated in more than 40 scientific conferences over all continents. Her interest fields are Migration, Human Resource Training and Development, Modern learning/teaching methods, including IT, Distance Education, and Moral values in Business. Professor has 12 distance courses. She has experience creating distance courses in Management and Economics and teaching them from 2005 using WebCT and Moodle at Kaunas University of Technology. She delivers Management Massive open online course (MOOC) from 2013.

She is a member of IEDRC, AOM, SASE, IABE and scientific and organizing committee of EURAM 2011, ICM21 conference.