



RESEARCH ARTICLE

USE OF FACEBOOK IN MENTORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS.

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Abstract

The use of web-based technology such as Facebook, twitter, blog, and other social networking sites has been widely used as a means of communication in education. However, there were few researches regarding the experiences of students in mentoring through the use of Facebook. This study aimed to determine if there is development potential experienced in mentoring episodes through Facebook on the part of the preservice teachers through assessing the level of their experiences during mentoring process in terms of; (1) increased energy, (2) potential to take action (3) increased knowledge of self and others (4) a boost to self-esteem, and (5) interest in more connections. A descriptive survey research designed was used in the study with 30 professional students taking up professional subjects in education. Result reveals that the respondents experienced the five good things when they exchange ideas or ask questions with their mentor teacher using Facebook. A boost to self-esteem ranked the highest among the good things experienced by the respondents while potential to take action as the least experienced. It was concluded that mentoring process can also be effective when done through the use of web-based technology. Hence, it is suggested that such technology should be used as medium for mentoring, however, mentor teachers should be trained with several web-based technologies to make them more effective in its use.

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Introduction: -

It has often been said that the only constant in this world is change, hence, preparing the learner for their future success means preparing them for a world of escalating revolution of globalization and global challenges. The response to these challenges varies from different regions and communities of each country since they have different traditions, needs, and opportunities. (Kelly & Kellam, 2009)

One of the technologies that have been proposed to use in education is Facebook. It have been statistically learned that adaptation of Facebook in Colleges and Universities in other countries such as United States and United Kingdom is remarkable since it offers a lot of pedagogical advantages for teachers and students (Muñoz C. 2009). Facebook was used in giving assignments, upcoming events, useful links, and samples of work outside of the classroom (Sánchez, R. A., Cortijo, V., & Javed, U. 2014). This suggests that this kind of internet-based learning can actively engage students in a manner unique from the traditional class lecture.

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In the College of Teacher Education at Laguna State Polytechnic University, one of the problems met by the mentor teacher in teaching students who are earning units in the Certificate for Teaching Proficiency Program or CTP students (those who are already professionals but are still taking units in education to make them eligible to teach) is the unavailability of a common schedule between them and the mentor teacher. The mentor teacher and these CTP students should meet at least once a week to discuss matters regarding their observation of the elementary or high school students. But since majority of these students were working on a part-time basis, it was difficult to find a common time to conduct a face-to-face interaction between the mentor and the students. Hence, Facebook was tapped as an avenue of mentoring.

Fletcher S & Mullen C.A. (Eds) (2012) suggests a model called “relational mentoring” which was composed of two aspects, the mentoring episodes and mentoring long term relationships. Mentoring episodes states that there is development potential happening even in a single interaction or exchange between a mentor and a mentee. This model is anchored on Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) of Jean Baker Miller who was one of the pioneers of the concept of RCT. This theory examines the intricacy of human relationships and the influence of culture to the quality of relationships that eventually affects healthy coexistence (McCauley M., 2013). This theory believes that growth-fostering relationships are the foremost needs of humans’ entire life and chronic disconnections are the source of psychological problems (Comstock D., et al., 2008). Miller’s model on relational-cultural theory suggests that growth in relationships happens when both people experience the “five good things” – (1) increased energy, (2) potential to take action (3) increased knowledge of self and others (4) a boost to self-esteem, and (5) interest in more connections.

Many educators in higher education institutions (HEIs) consider technology in teaching because of the current needs of the present learners in understanding the lessons and based on several researches, the use of technology in teaching and learning have benefited the learners. In this sense, the challenge relies on the faculty on the aspect of how they will use technology in the teaching and learning process. They should innovate and develop the desire to embrace the adoption and adaptation of technologies in learning (Thompson, A., Hansen, D., & Reinhart, P. 1996).

A bigger challenge lies ahead with the educators in Teacher Education because they are the ones who handle future teachers that would teach thousands of elementary and high school students. These future teachers would face the demands of the teaching and learning process such as the need to improvise and devise new ways of looking at things. They need to use their minds, feelings and reasoning abilities to reflect about their classroom practices and the children’s learning. As a result, teacher educators should be kept updated and well-informed of the new technology that the world offers for the learners’ sake (Mouza, 2005). Educators are recommended to introduce students to social networks since it involved innovation that can enhance learning, however, not all teachers are open to the idea of using technological medium in teaching. The teachers who are more likely to value the technological tool in their teaching are usually the ones who are using it and engaging in it.

Mentoring is a one-on-one relationship in which the character and competence of an apprentice will be developed through interaction with the advisor; it can be personal, academic, or career development and social, athletic, or artistic growth (Becker, 1994). Mentoring relationships promote learning within and beyond the work place, assist learners in receiving career help, and help learners realize developmental and psychosocial support (Hansman, 2001)

Mentoring through the use of social media has widely increased due to its accessibility. It has been recognized as a powerful tool in career development due to its potential to overcome the barriers of time and geographical location between the mentor and the mentee (Wong A.T. & Premkumar K. 2007). French, Hale, Johnson and Farr (1999), as cited by Fletcher, S., & Mullen, C. A. (2012), suggest that there are five major skills for coaching and mentoring through web-based technology namely; (1) interpersonal relationships through electronic networking, (2) harvesting the internet for instructional resources, (3) assessment websites, (4) integrating the web in teaching through self-directed modules, and, (5) utilizing collaborative conferencing systems. This means that teacher educators have to learn these skills to become a well-versed coach or mentor. However, according to the National Strategies Report (2010), as cited by Fletcher, S., & Mullen, C. A. (2012), one of the problems in mentoring and coaching is the lack of awareness among teacher educators, opportunities for co-coaching and initial teacher training. The findings indicate that few of the teacher educators use web-based technology in mentoring or other teaching purposes.

Facebook is one of the social networking tools that can be considered as a medium for facilitating communication among students and faculty. The concept of “real time” and “location-based” allows users to contribute content and

have communication with others. It is dubbed as the popular choice of the college students as an essential part of their “behind the scenes” college experiences (Mansell 2008). The demands of researches regarding Facebook have gained increasing interest due to its potential in education (Golbeck, 2008) to provide other pedagogical advantages to both teachers and students. Building on the face-to-face teacher-student relationship, social networks allow students to glimpse at the instructor profiles containing personal information, interests, background, and “friends,” which can enhance student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate.

Colin, M. (2008) concluded that although Facebook can be utilized as an educational resource, there are very few studies done regarding it. A study made by Roblyer M.D. & et al. (2010) compared the perception of students and faculty regarding the use of Facebook and similar technologies to support classroom work in which it was inferred that faculty are less likely to use these than the students. Nonetheless, as need arises in teaching, teachers should have to learn technology as medium for teaching.

McCarthy, J. (2012) studied on the efficacy of Facebook as a host site for e-mentoring between post graduate Students from Adelaide University in Australia and a group of associated professionals, local industry professionals or recent graduates from Penn State University in the United States. It was found that the two parties both benefited from the mentoring process. On the other hand, Mack, D., Behler, A., Roberts, B., & Rimland, E. (2007) recommend Facebook as an outreach tool to the library users because of its tested positive response from them. During the testing time, users are encouraged to ask questions and make a research consultation with the librarian using Facebook and found their willingness to do it.

In this study, the author tried to find out if there is development potential happening in mentoring episodes on the part of the preservice teachers by assessing the level of their experience during mentoring process through the use of Facebook in terms of the five good things – (1) increased energy, (2) potential to take action, (3) increased knowledge of self and others, (4) a boost to self-esteem, and (5) interest in more connections. It was conducted in Laguna State Polytechnic University Sta. Cruz, Laguna academic year 2013-2014.

This will further her familiarity and knowledge with the technology-based teaching and learning processes. To the other field study teachers, it will serve as their guide or pattern on how to engage in the web-based mentoring process. To the students, they will widen their horizon by using web-based communication such as Facebook.

Methodology:-

The respondents in this study were thirty students taking their Certificate for Teaching Proficiency (CTP) Program. The CTP students were already professionals but wanted to teach, hence, they enrolled in teacher education to take professional subjects. They were given proper orientation about the subjects, field study 1, 2 & 3. The duration of the course was nine (9) weeks so the preservice teachers had to take it for six hours a week tantamount to 54 hours equivalent to one semester. However, they were enrolled to other professional subjects at the same time. At the later part of the discussion, the mentor teacher gave them proper orientation on how they were going to conduct their observation of their target students in the elementary and high school and gave them instruction about the requirements to be submitted at the end of the course. The requirements were portfolios for FS 1, 2, and 3, a journal, and their respective daily time record (DTR). The proper guidelines for observation were based on the FS 1, 2, and 3 modules. The mentor teacher gave them term examinations about the course. Since it was quite difficult for both the preservice teachers and mentor teacher to meet, instead of submitting a notebook for their journal, they were required to open a “Facebook account” in which they could write all their observations, reflections, questions and clarification in their respective walls. They created a Facebook group account intended for this course and this served as a tool in mentoring between the mentor and the mentee.

After the three-week discussion, the mentor teacher endorsed them to the principal of the basic education (the pre-elementary, elementary and high school) for proper coordination. During observation, the pre-service teachers have the daily time record (DTR) with them to be signed by the resource teacher, as a proof that they really had their observation. After every observation, the pre-service teachers were required to write their observations, questions’ clarification, reflections or insights in the wall of their Facebook account. The mentor teacher read the written outputs and post her comments on their respective walls. They were required to ask questions or exchange ideas with the mentor on anything about their tasks or activities during their observations on a designated schedule so that there was a real interaction between the mentor and the mentee.

After the nine-week period, the mentor teacher gave them the self-made questionnaire about mentoring. The questions were based on the five good things experienced by the preservice teachers on the use of Facebook in mentoring them. It was tallied and analyzed using weighted mean with the following scale; 4.51-5.00 very high, 3.51-4.50 high, 2.51-3.5 moderately high, 1.51-2.50 low, 1.00 to 1.50 very low. However, since a smaller sample size was utilized in this study wherein statistical generalizability was not sought, the result presented here was intended to set for a larger and more exhaustive research study. The second part was an interview done with some of the respondents.

Results and Discussion:-

Tables 1 to 5 show the findings on the experience level of the CTP students about the mentoring episodes in the five aspects – energy and well-being, potential to take action, knowledge of self and others, self-esteem, and interest in more connection. On the other hand, table 6 shows the summary of the mean rank of the five good things experienced by the CTP students. As indicated in the data, the professional students have experienced the five aspects as follows:

Table 1: - Experience Level of the CTP Students on Energy and Well-Being

A. Energy and Well Being	Mean	Remarks
1. I feel good whenever I chat with my mentor teacher through Facebook.	4.60	Very high
2. I believe that engaging with my mentor through web connection like Facebook increases my consciousness (mental, emotional, and spiritual) of well-being.	4.20	High
3. Whenever I interact with others through Facebook, my mind is set to continue using it.	3.60	High
4. I feel energized whenever I have a conversation with my mentor teacher and classmates.	4.10	High
5. I feel blessed with the kind words and praises my mentor teacher commented on me.	4.00	High
<i>Weighted Mean</i>	4.10	High

Table 2: -Experience Level of the CTP Students on Potential to Take Action

B. Potential to Take Action	Mean	Remarks
1. I have no emotional resistance whenever I ask questions to my mentor teacher in Facebook.	2.60	Moderately high
2. I set my own standards and principles on what and how to ask about guidance and rules in the field study subjects through Facebook	4.50	High
3. I initiate conversation with my teacher in Facebook.	4.12	High
4. I do whatever my mentor teacher have instructed and suggested.	4.10	High
5. I am determined to finish the tasks given to me by my mentor teacher.	4.50	High
<i>Weighted Mean</i>	3.96	High

Table 3: - Experience Level of the CTP students on Knowledge of Self and Others.

C. Knowledge of Self and Others	Mean	Remarks
1. My self- awareness increases whenever I learn something new from my mentor teacher and classmates.	4.50	High
2. I gain insights as I read the reflections posted by my classmates as well as the comments made by my teacher.	4.10	High
3. I was able to access the accumulated knowledge from the past as I think of what to write in Facebook.	3.30	Moderately high
4. I was able to know my mentor teacher better through communication in Facebook.	4.40	High
5. I was able to know more about my classmates by chatting with them.	4.30	High
<i>Weighted Mean</i>	4.12	high

Table 4: -Experience level of the CTP students on Boost to Self-esteem

D. Boost to Self-esteem	Mean	Remarks
1. I feel happy whenever I am having conversation in Facebook with my teacher and classmates.	4.50	High
2. My self-confidence increases whenever my teacher guides me with what to do with the course during conversation in Facebook.	5.00	Very high
3. My self-image is heightened whenever my teacher praises me in what I accomplish for a day's activity because I know that my classmates will see it in Facebook.	4.38	High
4. The encouragement of my mentor teacher through Facebook boosts my morale whenever I encounter difficulties in the requirements of the subjects.	4.51	Very High
5. My self-image is enhanced whenever my mentor teacher immediately answers me during our conversation in Facebook.	4.20	High
<i>Weighted Mean</i>	4.52	Very high

Table 5: -Experience Level of the CTP students on Interest in More Connection

Interest in More Connection	Mean	Remarks
1. I always look forward for the comments made by my mentor teacher.	3.90	High
2. I spend more time in conversation with my mentor teacher.	4.60	Very high
3. I establish rapport with my mentor teacher and classmates while doing the reflective journal in Facebook.	4.25	high
4. I want to know more about the interest of my mentor teacher and classmates whenever we have conversation in Facebook.	4.00	High
5. I am looking forward for the conversation I have with my classmates and mentor teacher.	3.90	High
<i>Weighted Mean</i>	4.13	High

Table 6: - Summary of Mean Rank of Five Good Things Experienced in Relational Mentoring through Facebook

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Remarks	Rank
A. Energy & Well Being	4.10	High	4 th
B. Potential to Take Action	3.96	High	5 th
C. Knowledge of Self & Others	4.12	High	3 rd
D. Self-esteem	4.52	Very high	1 st
E. Interest in more connection	4.13	High	2 nd

Notice that in table 1, the highest weighted mean was on the good feelings of the respondents on using Facebook while chatting with the mentor. The conversation with the mentor teacher has a great impact for them to continue asking questions regarding what to do during their class observations. This was due to how the mentor teacher habitually commended the CTP students for a job well-done and encouraged them every time they chat in Facebook. As one of the respondents said during the interview:

“Chatting with Ma’am makes me feel happy because she keeps pushing me to finish this subject though it is quite difficult for me due to the schedule.”

However, the moderately high remarks on statement number 1 in table 2 was noticeable which can mean that although they were free to ask questions to their mentor teachers, still, there were slight hesitations among them. This could be attributed to their qualms on how the mentor teacher could accept or admit their questions. One of the CTP students said that:

“I’m a little bit shy of asking ma’am, because she might take my question as funny.”

Moreover, a remark of moderately high was given regarding the easy access of the accumulated knowledge from the past (table 3, item number 3). This had the lowest mean compared with other indicators of knowledge of self and

others. This indicated that recalling previous activities in the class observations was sometimes difficult due to the students' other preoccupations. One of respondents answered during the interview.

"Because I am studying and working at the same time, sometimes I forgot what we've done on the past weeks, thanks to my notes."

On the other hand, item number 2 in table 4 got the highest remark compared with other statements, the respondents' self-confidence increases during their interaction in Facebook. This could be attributed to the nature of conversation that existed between the mentor teacher and the mentee, both parties managed to understand what was being conveyed in the course of the subject. An overall weighted mean of 4.52 with a very high remark shows that the experience level of the mentees in the aspect of boost to self-esteem using Facebook served its purpose. As one of the respondents stated:

"I think I agree with my classmates that there was really a clear conversation between us and our teacher on what to do with our field study courses through giving us instruction in Facebook, that's why we managed to do it well."

Table 5 registers the data on interest in more connection; the weighted mean value of 4.6 reveals that the time spent by the pre-service teachers in conversing with the mentor teacher is very high. This indicates that the mentees were interested to connect more with their mentor and classmates.

"Ma'am answered my questions even though, sometimes, they're out of the topic."

Table 6 shows the summary table of the mean rank of the five good things experienced in relational mentoring through Facebook. It is reflected in the table that boost to self-esteem had the highest mean rank of 4.52 which implied that most of the respondents agreed that they experience a high level of self-confidence through mentoring in Facebook. Second in rank is interest in more connection with an overall mean value of 4.13 and a high remark. Third is knowledge of self and others with a weighted mean of 4.12 and with a high remark. Fourth rank goes to energy and well-being with a weighted mean of 4.10 and a high remark. Though the least experienced by the respondents was potential to take action with an overall mean value of 3.96, it was still categorized as high remark. Generally, the respondents believed that they experienced these five good things when they exchange their ideas or ask questions to their mentor teacher using Facebook. The data shows that mentoring, whether a face-to-face interaction or through web-based technology, had significant effect on the part of the mentees and the mentor teacher. This finding was supported by Fletcher S & Mullen C.A. (Eds) (2012) who reported that mentoring episodes can be developed even in a single interaction or exchange between the mentor and the mentee. Moreover, the use of Facebook can be a potential tool in exchanging ideas or interaction as reflected in the study of McCarthy (2012).

Conclusions/Implications:-

The respondents experienced the five good things in the use of Facebook – energy and well-being, potential to take action, knowledge of self and others, boost to self-esteem, and interest in more connection. This kind of social media can be used as a tool for mentoring in a more advantageous way for the professional students earning units in education; though the mentor teacher and mentee do not meet face-to-face, the relation between them can be deepened. The research indicates that the use of Facebook can be more purposive if it can be utilized in a proper manner. In addition, the success of using Facebook for teaching-learning purposes depends on the teacher educators who can handle and manage it well. Therefore, a great responsibility lies on the teachers who can manipulate and learn things about web-based technology. However, since some teachers lack confidence and competence in the use of the web-based technology, only a few are active in using it. It is therefore suggested that teacher educators be trained with several web-based technologies and use it in a way that will make them used to it because awareness and regular use of technology can enhance their capacity to use it.

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