

SOCIAL NETWORK IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT DISCOURSE

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Abstract. The tendencies of knowledge society creation and globalization encourage Lithuanian higher education institutions to search for innovative ways to facilitate the learning process and explore social networks for higher educational institution management. This paper explores the usage of social networking site Facebook of private higher educational institution in Lithuania and emphasizes effective management discourse. This study reveals online relationships among members of higher educational institution community and its results suggest that observing actions of others social network members were more common than interaction. Furthermore, study discloses positive presumptions for enabling effective performance management in the organization.

Keywords: management, social networking, higher education institution.

Jel classification: M1, I2

1. Introduction

Taking globalization into consideration, it is worth noting that it promotes economical and social progress, though, it causes considerable challenges and social risks which are supposed to be managed to a certain extent in separate national level, also by organizations or at a personal level. Those are the educational processes which must be dealt with and effective management plays an important role as well. Virtually, there are a number of today's issues which motivate us to seek optimal solutions for certain problems in relation to the flexibility of organizations and standard mobility, especially in higher education institution. In fact, the intended matters are the following: the increased mobility of youth, migration, groups of social exclusion and integration of minorities as well as demographic problems. While targeting at positive transformations, it is necessary to realize a dynamic context of sociocultural atmosphere and, what is more important, be able to manage it in pluralistic environments applying the principle of justice, as well as the distribution and management of the impartial material and human resources (Gudykunst 2005; Spitzberg 2000). It is crucial to highlight the possibilities to manage higher educational institution, in particular, by empowering social networking. Methodology: The social network analysis

was explored by measuring of relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations, computers, URLs, and other connected information / knowledge entities. The analyse of social network sites was carried out by private company „Prosperitus” and “Inovaciniai projektai” working on the project of the College of Social Sciences (No.VP1-2.1-ŠMM-04-K-015). Data was processed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 18.0 for Windows statistical data processing software and „Kokybis” (quality data processing software).

2. Social networking in higher education

A modern society, involving change tendencies such as formation of the digital society, growing migration, social demographical structure, etc, poses new challenges for higher education system.

The phenomenon of globalization, in fact, leads towards the processes of transformations involving each sphere of daily life and addressing the focus to new tendencies such as social network service usage in higher education institutions. Social networks can be analysed in several different ways, firstly their substance matter definition is formed by sociology, where this phenomenon can be analysed as a social component of social capital (Ziliukaite 2004; Bourdieu 2003; Putnam 2001). Otherwise, the defi-

nition of social networks highlights one of the intercultural communication theories, naming them as facilitators to reach effective results (Gudykunst 2005; Kvieskaite 2011). At the same time it is important to stress out that the social network analyses highlight the aspect of social capital dimension when the social capital is created and increased through social networks (Kim *et al.* 2010; Clemons 2009; Gatautis 2008). By emphasizing theories of social networks and social capital, it is possible to identify that Bourdieu (2003) and Coleman (1990) notes structural resources while examining the social capital forms, meanwhile Putman focuses on trust, norms and improving networks in order to reach a more effective society. Bourdieu (2003) defines social capital at a level of an individual, dissociating from a collective body, that is - social relations and communications network that is used by a person (Matonytė 2004); Coleman (1990) points out common norms and trust in social networks as social capital forms and highlights the representational useful resources (Coleman 1990). Emphasising the role of Putnam (2001) who widely analysed the topic of social capital, it is crucial to note that he defines social capital as relations between individuals, social networks, and their reciprocity and trustworthiness norms (Putnam 2001). The improvement of reciprocity based on the growing intertrust is examined by Gudykunst (2005). Presenting the theories, oriented to the effective result that is distinguished by the theory anxiety control, which seeks to explain the effective communication of individual and group levels (Gudykunst 2005). In this case, the social networks that provide additional information about a specific individual are deployed in order to reduce anxiety and increase confidence towards a particular individual or a group of people, thus ensuring effective intercultural communication. In recent decades, the research topic of social networks, especially the social network sites on the Internet, such as Facebook are rapidly evolving (Cummings *et al.* 2006, Wellman *et al.* 2001). The popularity of online social network sites is determined by the fact that they present alternatives to developing contacts and sharing common interests with other people (Ellison *et al.* 2006; Horrigan 2002). Although there is a lack of empirical works due to the social capital created by the existing social networks on the Internet, a doubt arises (Williams 2006; Bargh, McKenna 2004) concerning the developed and strengthened relationships on the Internet. Furthermore it is important to highlight that social network sites may be used for institutional internal and external communication development (Bates *et al.* 2008) in higher education institution (Fig. 1).

3. Exploring effective management

Socio-economic, cultural, political and other changes, the trends of globalization presupposed the necessity of continuous changes in education (Renewed Social Agenda 2009; Competitive European regions through research and innovation 2007). The rate of formation of the knowledge society, ensuring dissemination of information and its accessibility raises significant questions for politicians, practitioners and scientists, relating to migration and demographical changes, understanding of the identity of the individual and the public spirit, reciprocal understanding and tolerance towards diversity and other. Actualizing the mentioned trends and emphasizing the importance of communication and cooperation among the individuals or their groups different in their ethnic, racial, cultural or sub-cultural backgrounds, intercultural effective management of social network in higher educational institution are identified as essential agents of change in the rapidly changing society. Social networking in higher education is essential in nowadays management system. In that case the concept of effective performance management is explored. Different effective performance management components are underlined by various scientists; such as communicative (Pempek *et al.* 2009; Bacal 2007), developmental, monitorial and other important (Cardy, Leonard 2011; Paliulis, Uturyte-Vrubliauskiene 2010; Axson 2010; Chatterjee, Segars 2006; Hale, Whitlam 2000) and others aspects. When analysing effective performance management an important role is given for a holistic approach to learning in the organisation, which helps to move to the learner organisations that are dominant in the knowledge-based society (Davidaviciene 2008; Hinton, Barnes 2005; Neely, Mills, Gregory, Platts 1995). Precisely this is emphasised by Robert L. Cardy, Brian Leonard (2011), with a view that effective performance management involves not only employees' developmental processes, but also feedback, employee cooperation while solving arising problems, as well as developing and improving work performance. According to Robert Bacal (1999): "performance management is an ongoing communication process, undertaken in partnership, between an employee and his or her immediate supervisor that involves establishing clear expectations and understanding about the jobs to be done". This definition presupposes the idea that performance management can be analysed through the discourse of communication, which helps to identify the processes of improvement on the level of individual and organisation.

The concept of performance management, by its content meaning definition, also can emphasise management in the organisation: “performance management encompasses all the processes, information, and systems used by managers to set strategy, develop plans, monitor execution, forecast performance, report result, and make decisions” (Axson 2010). Summarising the definitions of effective performance management, it can be named as a whole of processes, methods or systems, which maintain and improve individuals’ performance whilst simultaneously aiming to improve the performance of the organization (Hale, Whitlam 2000).

Addressing the effective performance management in education institution in Lithuania it is important to stress out different aspects of the education reform such as: the role of the teacher, changes of education and values, potentials for development of pedagogues’ competences, school learners, students, peculiarities of the future school and other relevant issues investigated by various scientists (Aramaviciute, Martisauskiene 2009; Barkauskaite 2009; Kliminskas, Janiunaite 2009; Motiejuniene, Zadeikaite 2009; Rutkiene, Zuzeviciute 2009; Zelvys 2009, 1999; Targamadze 2009, 2006; Bruzgeleviciene 2008; Geniene 2003).

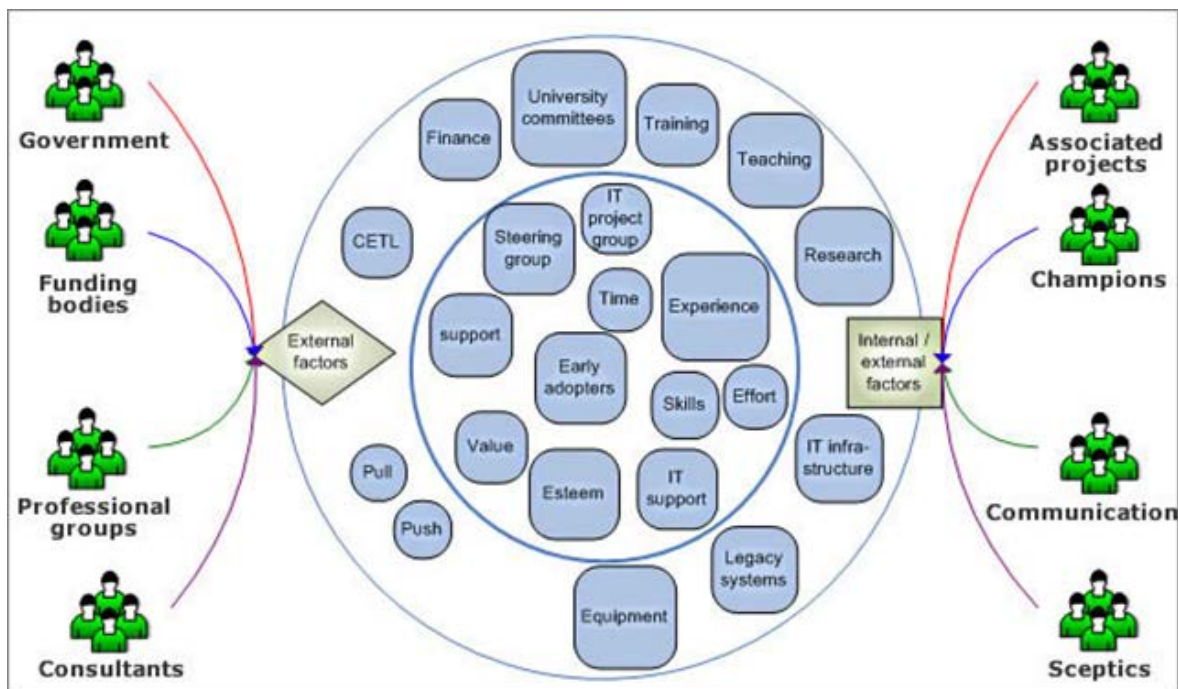


Fig.1. Effective management in social networking (Source: Bates *et al.* 2008)

This context reveals the usage innovation, such as social network sites, in the education system and the exploration of effective performance management (Brant 2010; Borgatti *et al.* 2006; Kossinets 2006; Watts 2003, 1999; Krause, Ruxton 2002; Watts, Strogatz 1998; Klodahl *et al.* 1994; Wasserman, Faust 1994; Sade, Dow 1994).

4. Social network analysis

The Data collection could involve four basic network data collection methods: positional analysis, reputation / attribution method, decisional analysis, international methods. In this article the social network analysis involved the case studies on the social network sites such as Moodle, Facebook as well as internet portal. The analysis reveals those Facebook and internet portals are

mostly used for organizational (external or internal) communication.

According to the case study on Facebook (during the January-June 2011), it is revealed that the higher education institution submitted the information the most actively in April, when 36 messages were published; whereas the least messages were published in January and June, with accordingly 12 and 6 messages submitted. As results shows that communication on facebook is different concerning different months.

These results can also be associated with the specificity of the higher education institution’s activity, when in January and June student exam sessions proceed; therefore it is natural that the flow of information is not that active. Evaluating the content of the messages, it is obvious that the most sympathies of the members of the higher education institution social network were given to

the information published during the first quarter of the year. The most popular message during the months of January-June 2011 was about the event of the higher education institution which was held for 14th February celebration (even 217 social network users expressed sympathy by pushing “like”). The quintet of the mostly liked messages according to the members of the social network also included college greetings for students, as well as wishes to pass the exams successfully. It reveals that social networks play an important role

in different effective management elements such as – planning, organizing, management and control. Furthermore the that Facebook case study identify that all these activities are focused on internal communication of higher education institution and the main target group are the students from current institution.

The significant correlation was identified by evaluating the weight between the Number of news and Number of “Like” (Table 1).

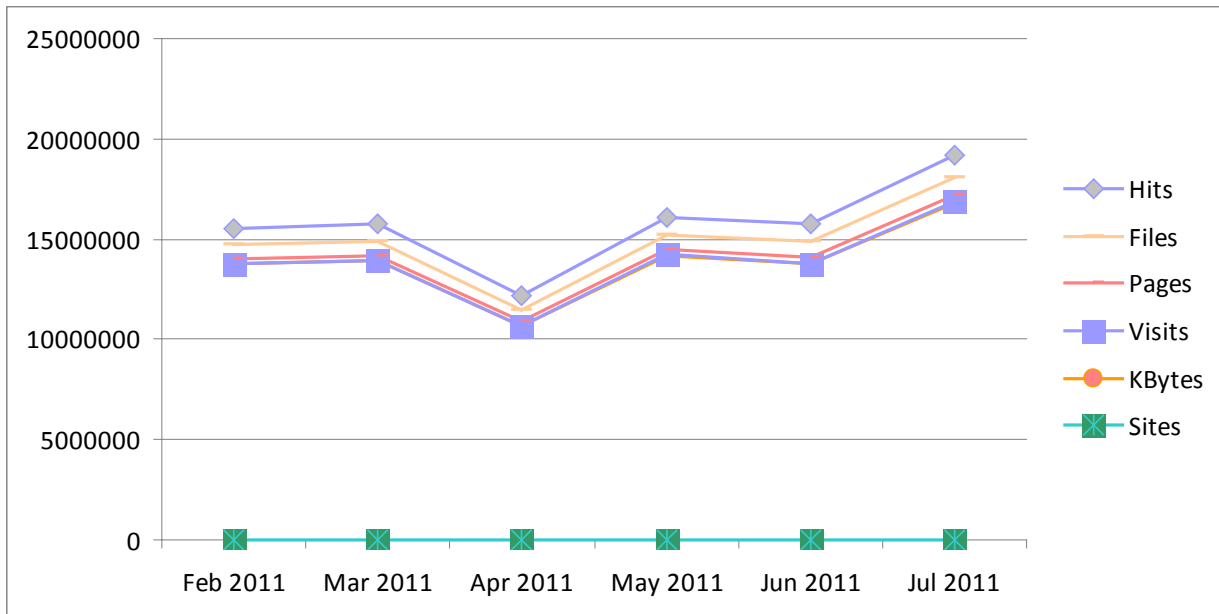


Fig. 2. The interaction in the internet site

Table 1. Correlation: interaction between number of news and “Like”

		Number of news
Number of “Like”	Pearson Correlation	0,700
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,122

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Exploring the data based on the internet site (Fig. 2) it is important to point out that the most popular by visitors this internet site was on July (28099 visits per month) and January (26282) and visitor were quite passive on April (16379). These differences may be interpreted by exploring the quantitative data analyses based on data content. It shows that the most popular information on July is related with the enrolment laws for students and on July the most checked information was the timetable for students’ exams. It encloses the exploration of this internet site and its usage for internal as well as external communication. In this case it is important to highlight that all provided information in the internet site were focused on these target groups: current students, future students, higher educational institution’ staff (admini-

stration and lecturers) as well as social partners. These different target groups provoked for various content of the published information on the internet site. Moreover exploring the main effective management elements it could be underlined that the planning, organizing, management activities were supported thought the internet site. Furthermore the control element was not included.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This analysis reveals the effective management discourse of social network sites in higher education institution. It is important to highlight that users in Facebook and internet site interact differently. It may stress out effective management in higher educational institution by exploring various tools for internal and external communication development in organization.

The analyses of the usage of social networks within the same higher education institution has enclosed that the social network sites are mainly focused on the internal communication between students and/or community in higher education institution and rather on external communication.

Furthermore, these results provoke to empower the social network sites of higher education institution for the larger usage such as educational (by ensuring the possibilities what and how to study or enabling the study opportunities on-line) as well as for external communication issues (by providing interactive material for future students, organising the fundraising or communicating with alumni. Social networks may play an important role for higher educational institution effective management and in moving them forward.

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