

## Applying Facebook Group as a Learning Management System (LMS) in Finance Classes at Bangladesh Open University

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### *Abstract*

*Now-a-days, in the blended learning environment, Learning Management Systems (LMS) have been used rapidly as a popular means of university teaching and learning. In LMS, both the teachers and learners interact, share, view, monitor, and assess activities, tasks, and assignments. Due to the limitations of traditional LMSs, Facebook groups have been considered as supplementary/substitutes of LMS in the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) environment. Facebook group has been applied as an LMS in the finance classes of the MBA (Bangla) program which is operated by Open School of Bangladesh Open University. According to SMART goal setting theory of Locke and Latham (1990) and the ADDIE model, this has been formulated and implemented considering the learners' needs. Although Facebook groups as an LMS has several advantages, implementing Facebook in teaching and learning is challenging for learners and faculty members because continuous surveillance, prompt feedback, and regular updates is required. In developing Facebook groups as an LMS, several challenges such as formalization, privacy, safety issues may arise; however, proper policy guidelines, online surveillance, and teachers' facilitation role may overcome these challenges.*

### **KEYWORDS**

*Blended Learning, LMS, SMART Goal, ADDIE Model*

## **Introduction**

21<sup>st</sup>-century learners frequently used mobile technologies, virtual realities, and software applications in their daily life and education (Chen, 2014). Social networking sites (SNSs) as web 2.0 technologies are used for maintaining a social relationship where someone can view, post, and share something with others (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In the academic arena, SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, Instagram, Pinterest, Blogs, and LinkedIn become popular around the world (Siddike et al., 2015; Dickson & Holley, 2010). In a quality learning environment, SNS such as Facebook creates a positive attitude among the teachers (Pasek & Hargittai, 2009) which supports communication and improves learners' social, cognitive, and critical thinking skills (Christofides et al., 2009; Lampe et al., 2008).

Facebook has become one of the fastest and largest SNSs that play an essential role in academia by using it in different scholastic disciplines and applying it as an LMS (Siddike et al., 2015). The unique built-in functions of Facebook i.e. newsfeed, timeline, notifications, messages and inbox, live, groups, and comments offer pedagogical, social, and technological affordances (Wang et al., 2012). In Bangladesh, 33 million people use Facebook (Internet World Stats, 2020) and Dhaka ranked 2nd according to the active Facebook users in the world (Murad, 2017) which indicates the popularity of Facebook in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is much more concerned about inclusive education. Application of Facebook group as an LMS in classroom teaching and learning will ensure active as well as student-centered learning.

The aim of this study is to present the overview of the usage of LMS at the Open School of Bangladesh Open University. Besides this, the study has specific objectives which are:

1. To apply Facebook group as an LMS in the finance classes.
2. To find out the effectiveness of Facebook group in active learning.

### **Context and Current Practices**

Considering technological aspects of teaching, Bangladesh is still in the embryonic stage of adopting e-learning even though it has been accepted as an effective mode of delivering quality education (Sarkar et al., 2019). LMS as an e-learning platform provides personalized instruction, e-resources sharing, grading, and uploading yearly events, discussions, group collaboration, web conferencing, and peer review which most of the public and private universities required nowadays (Shoma, 2016). Established private universities along with several public universities in Bangladesh are now using LMS as an e-learning platform (HEQEP, 2017) which facilitates outside the classroom learning and teaching (Vassilakis et al., 2017). In tertiary education of Bangladesh, online discussion forums along with Facebook groups become a part of education (Rahman & Rahman, 2013). The use of Facebook groups as an LMS during Covid-19 helps educational institutions of Bangladesh to conduct regular classes as well as improve existing teaching practices (Munni & Hasan, 2020) by ensuring interactive teaching and learning activities on Facebook groups.

BOU operates under a blended learning approach where day-long face-to-face tutorial services are provided only on Friday and Saturday in its own campuses and affiliated institutions. With a view to achieving the government's Digital Bangladesh agenda and SDG-4, BOU commenced a paradigm shift from traditional ODL to technology-enabled ODL through LMS and web 2.0 technologies (Mannan, 2016). This transformation creates lifelong learning opportunities for ODL learners in the digital environment. But most of the learners fail to enjoy the benefits provided by the e-learning platforms e.g. LMS because most of the learners of BOU do not have sufficient digital literacy. Moreover, adult learners are not comfortable with technology-enabled learning like young learners.

The adoption and usage of BOU's e-learning platform i.e. LMS is very minimal. In LMS the interaction between learners and students is limited and in case of vast scale and countrywide programs e.g. BBA, M.B.A, and BA/BSS it is very difficult to maintain communication with the students. In Bangladesh, Facebook becomes a popular and user-friendly social networking site that can be used for educational purposes. Most of the faculty members and learners are acquainted with the usage of Facebook groups. BOU has a verified official Facebook group along with pages

by which different important news; information is circulated among the students. In addition to that several Facebook groups and pages are available which are not managed and controlled by the administrative staff and faculty members. If different faculty members and administrative staff manage and control the Facebook groups for academic purposes this will be a supplement/substitute of the existing LMS where the interaction of the learners and teachers will be maximum.

### **Literature Review**

Learning Management Systems (LMS) as an integrated computer system has been evolving rapidly which affects university teaching and learning (Coates et al., 2005). Teachers can assess students' performance in LMS by viewing their activities, tasks, and assignments. Moodle for example as an LMS enables a virtual platform of online learning for both learners and teachers where through different instructive tasks, forums, and chats they can share their knowledge (Martin-Blas & Serrano-Fernandez, 2009). LMS integrates collaborative as well as interactive learning activities in a blended learning environment where the strong commitment of all stakeholders is required (Dias et al., 2014).

In the academic arena, it is believed that LMS enables independent learning of the students (Vrasidas, 2004) and provides a platform for interaction between the learners for constructive learning (Dillenbourg et al., 2002) but it is found that the use of LMSs in tertiary education has limited scale usefulness (Meishar et al., 2012). Moreover, LMSs need expert technical teams for adoption and maintenance which makes LMSs costly and burdensome for the educational institutions (Sanchez-Franco, 2010).

In LMSs, simplistic models of auto-evaluation have been used and it is very difficult to incorporate alternative assessment elements (Coats et al., 2005). Students have no or limited control over the use of LMSs which obstruct their self-paced learning (Meishar et al., 2012). According to usage patterns, LMSs are best suited for administrative efficiency than substantive learning and teaching activities (Mott, 2010). Besides that, LMSs are the obstacles for students' centred learning as teachers generate courses, upload the academic contents, commence discussions, and form groups.

As only a few teachers use LMSs in an innovative way, it does not produce new forms of learning and teaching (Nachmias & Ram, 2009).

Facebook groups contain social, pedagogical, and technological elements of LMS which makes the Facebook groups an alternative to LMS (Wang et al., 2012). Due to the limitations of traditional LMSs, Facebook groups have been considered as supplementary/substitutes of LMS. The participants of a Facebook group academically outperformed LMS e.g. Moodle and iCas (Chen, 2014). Moreover, participants demonstrated a more positive attitude towards Facebook groups learning than traditional LMS learning. It is found that students are satisfied in using Facebook groups as an LMS because in Facebook groups, announcements, resources sharing, conducting the tutorial session, and organizing online discussion is possible as like as LMS (Wang et al., 2012). Despite having some major disadvantages for both learners and teachers Facebook groups have numerous discrete advantages over traditional LMS (Meishar et al., 2012).

### **Action Plan**

The current practices of LMS in my Finance classes have several drawbacks as it fails to accommodate student-centered method. Due to this limitation, I want to apply Facebook groups as an LMS in my classes. I had formulated an action plan which were consistent with the SMART goal setting theory of Locke and Latham (1990) and the ADDIE model. Here SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound and ADDIE stands for Analyze, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The action plan of my proposed practices has been given below:

#### **Analyze:**

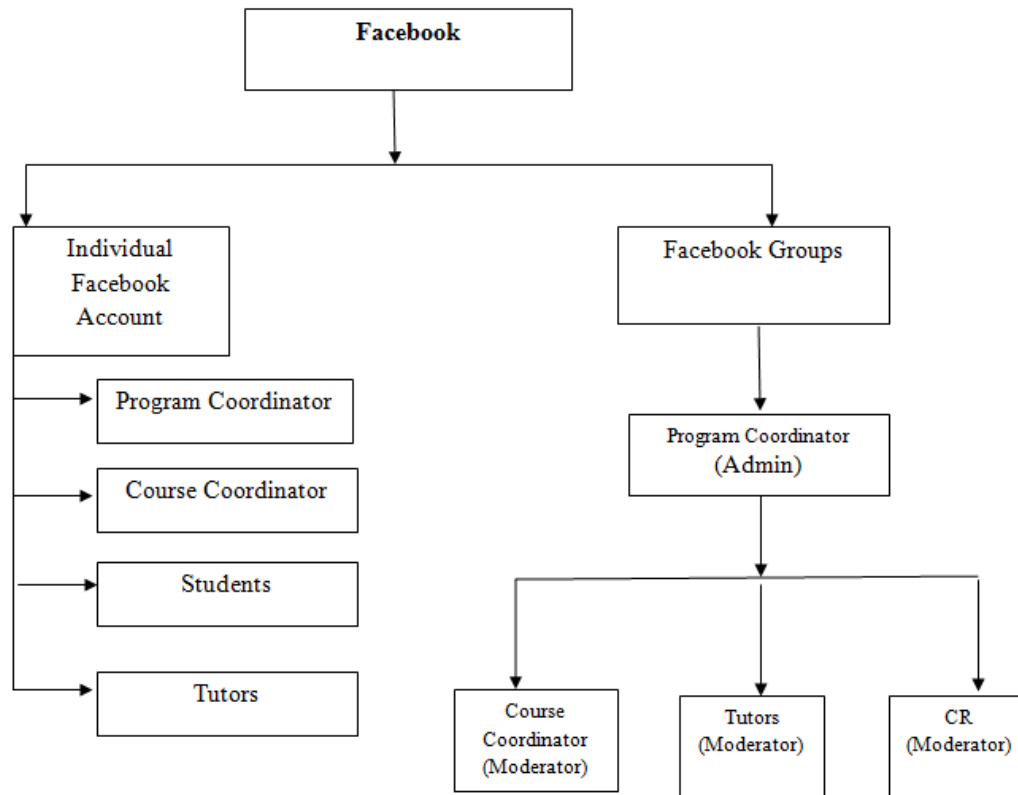
Based on the literature, first of all I had analysed the instructional goals, audience characteristics, and required resources. After consulting with the Business Studies discipline Chairman, Program Co-ordinator, and Dean, I set the goal which was to make Facebook groups as an LMS. Afterward, I had analysed the audience characteristics. Target audiences are the students of the MBA program's 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> batch along with their respective course tutors. In the required resources section I focused on the internet connection, content download, upload, and a supervisor to monitor the group activities. Here I made a SMART goal setting which is given below:

**Table 1. Action Plan according to SMART goal setting**

<b>Target</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Result</b>
All students (100%) joined in the Facebook groups among which 70% ( <b>Specific and Attainable</b> ) of the students regularly involved in the group activities and 90 % ( <b>Specific and Attainable</b> ) of the faculty members posted, responded to the students' queries.	This has been implemented from January 2022 to June 2022 ( <b>Time-Bound</b> )	At the end of the semester, students' grades are higher than in the previous semester ( <b>Measurable</b> ). After joining this group, students are able to discuss different topics, download several organized materials, and get updated about the examination ( <b>Reliable</b> ).

**Design:**

In January 2022, I created Facebook groups according to the Finance courses in the MBA program. In the Uttara study centre of MBA program several Facebook groups have been opened with a view to applying Facebook groups as an LMS. Total three batches are running, so total three Facebook groups have been created as each batch has different Finance courses. The Facebook groups are designed like this:



**Figure 1. Facebook Group Structure**

**Development:**

From the first day of my face-to-face tutorial session, I opened Facebook groups. Then I requested all the students to join and add the Program Coordinator, and Tutors in these groups. The Program coordinator of the MBA Program are admin of these groups, Course Coordinator (Me), Tutors and Class Representatives were the moderators of these groups. The duration of those groups will be 6 months. During this time, I shared different important content, materials; and students discussed and download this. I along with Program coordinator announced important events and news (Wang et al., 2012; Siddike et al., 2015). Students posted problems and queries in the Groups wall section. A sample of Facebook groups' formation has been given below:

**Table 2. Formation of Facebook Study Groups**

No.	Batch	Semester	Course Code	Course Name	Duration of Groups	No. of participants
01.	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	FIN-2202	Financial Institutions and Markets	January 2022- June 2022	45
02.	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	OSMBA-1203	Corporate Finance	January 2022- June 2022	45

**Implementation:**

As almost all of the programs including MBA are conducted in the blended learning approach, it is important to maintain communication and interaction on a frequent basis. During the face-to-face tutorial sessions (i.e., Friday and Saturday), I encouraged learners to participate in Facebook group activities. Both the teachers and students could post and share different complex course-related issues in these Facebook groups from January 2022 to June 2022. The materials and content that had been shared by the group members can be viewed, replied to, and downloaded by the rest of the group members. Several assessment tasks i.e. quizzes and class tests of the students would be taken by posting the link of Google Docs in the Facebook groups.

**Evaluation:**

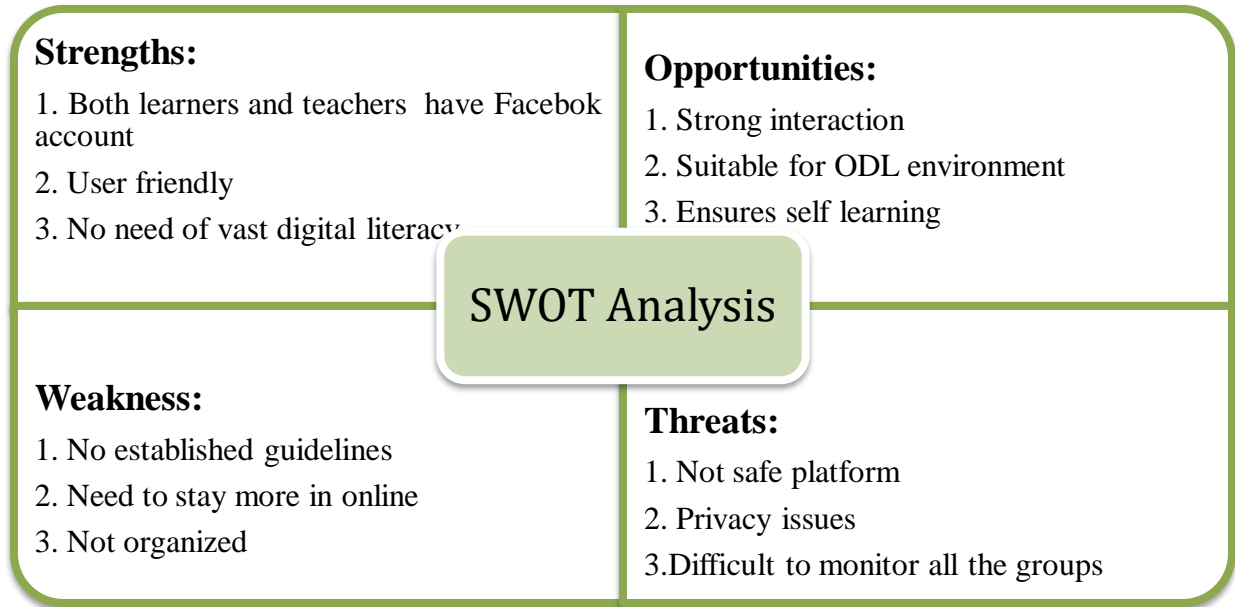
The active participation of every learner in the Facebook groups from January 2022 to June 2022 had been observed very closely through the reactions, posts, comments, replies, shares they had done in groups. Admin and moderators of these groups regularly checked the updated status and notifications of these groups. At the end of the semester, the effectiveness of Facebook groups as an LMS had been evaluated. A survey questionnaire had been provided to the learners and teachers about the application of Facebook groups as an LMS. In addition to that, an in-depth interview had been conducted with the students and teachers about the effectiveness of Facebook groups.

The aim of applying Facebook groups as an LMS in Finance classes is to improve the teaching-learning strategy. Facebook groups as an LMS transform the focus of the faculty members from content-based-learning to process-based learning (Vogel & Klassen, 2001) and facilitates active



learning from passive learning (Herse & Lee, 2005). Although Facebook groups as an LMS has several advantages, implementing Facebook in teaching and learning is challenging for learners and faculty members (Gray et al., 2010). The SWOT analysis of using Facebook groups as LMS is given below:

**Table 3. SWOT Analysis of Facebook Groups as an LMS**



Implementing Facebook groups as LMS required continuous surveillance, prompt feedback, and regular updates. The admin and moderators of the Facebook groups need to stay online all the time, so it will be very difficult for them to monitor the whole teaching-learning activities.

Despite having three LMSs of BOU, it may seem confusing why it is required to apply Facebook groups as an LMS in BOU for distance learners. There remains a lack of interaction in LMS which motivates me to apply Facebook groups as an LMS in Finance classes. DeSchryver et al. (2009) stated that students were comfortable with the usage of Facebook groups for class purposes and satisfied with the affordances of Facebook groups as an LMS (Wang et al., 2012). Considering the challenges, privacy, and safety of Facebook should be strengthened. The authentic Facebook profile of the students will be added to the groups. Each and every post, comments, files, audios, and videos should be monitored by the moderators and admin. Open School and BOU authorities will develop specific guidelines about the usage of these Facebook groups. Every user will obey

the protocol of these groups. A virtual proctorial team should be formed to resolve disputes and complications. Awareness among the students and teachers should be raised about the effective use of Facebook groups. If these stern actions can be taken then Facebook groups will be working as an LMS which will improve existing teaching-learning strategies.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

There is a dilemma about using Facebook groups as an LMS in the academic field among the academician and the education specialist. Although Facebook groups have some major disadvantages it provides several advantages over traditional LMS (Meishar et al., 2012). It becomes painstaking for faculty members to connect all the learners in existing LMSs of BOU and involve them in collaborative as well as student-centred learning. Applying Facebook groups as an LMS in Finance classes at BOU needs special attraction and precaution. The first obstacle that may arise is the formalization of the Facebook groups in BOU. Baran (2010) mentioned that Facebook groups can be used as a formal teaching and learning tool. Hamat et al(2012) concluded that Facebook groups can be used as a formal and informal learning tool in Malaysian higher educational institutions. So, formalizing Facebook groups as an LMS a discussion with the higher authority regarding the usage of Facebook groups can be arranged by the School.

In Facebook groups' privacy and security is one of the major concerns, so it is required to formulate policy guidelines, build online proctorial teams, and ensure assistance from technical experts (Wang et al., 2012). Surveillance and monitoring of the Facebook groups is a prerequisite. For this reason, groups' admin and moderator panel need to be vigilant enough to apply Facebook groups as an LMS but if they do not want to mix learning with social lives (Jones et al., 2010) it will be a challenge. As the role of teachers in Facebook groups is just like a facilitator (Yunus & Salehi, 2012), they need to play a proactive role in implementing Facebook groups as an LMS in their classes.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) is an integrated computer system used in teaching and learning (Coates et al., 2005). LMS as a virtual platform enables online learning for both learners and teachers (Martin-Blas & Serrano-Fernandez, 2009). In the study of Meishar et al (2012); Nachmias and Ram (2009); Lonn and Teasley (2009) several limitations of LMS have been found

which are: short duration of study materials, lack of innovation of the course teachers in LMS, lack of interaction between students and teachers. Facebook groups can be used as supplementary/substitutes of LMS in classroom teaching and learning (Wang et al., 2012; Siddike et al. 2015). Facebook groups as LMS facilitates students in communicating and collaborating with the faculty members in their learning process (Roblyer et al., 2010).

The learners of BOU want to get connected all the time after classroom teaching and learning as they customize their way of learning due to the nature of the ODL environment. So the application of Facebook groups as an LMS in Finance classes at BOU has been discussed in this study. Based on the study of Wang et al., (2012); Siddike et al., (2015), SMART goal- setting theory of Locke and Latham (1990), ADDIE approach of Branch (2009) an action plan has been developed to apply Facebook groups as an LMS in Finance classes at BOU. In developing Facebook groups as an LMS several challenges e.g. formalization, privacy, safety issues may arise but proper policy guidelines, online surveillance, and teachers' facilitation role may overcome these challenges. As most of the learners have personalized Facebook account, the proposed study aims at applying Facebook groups as an LMS in Finance classes at BOU which will ensure collaborative, inquiry-based, and student-centred learning of the students.

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