

SOCIAL MEDIA IN A CONTENT COURSE FOR THE DIGITAL NATIVES

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Abstract: Digital technologies and the Internet have revolutionized the way people gather information and acquire new knowledge. With a click of a button or a touch on the screen, any person who is wired to the internet can access a wealth of information, ranging from books, poems, articles, graphics, animations and so much more. It is imperative that educational systems and classroom practices must change to serve our 21st century students better. This study examines the use of Edmodo as a social media to teach a course in Pedagogy to a class of digital natives. The media is used as an out-of-class communication forum to post/submit assignments and resources, discuss relevant issues, exchange information, and handle housekeeping purposes. A survey of students' responses and discussions on their participatory process leads to insights on how the social media helps achieve the required competences.

Keywords: digital natives, digital immigrants, Edmodo, content course, 21st century skills, achievement of learning outcomes

With the expanding use of global communication technology, the spread of English has become faster than ever among the young people. In urban settings, young people are hooked on various social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and learn more from You Tube, Wikipedia, Google than from their teachers. As English is predominantly used in those media, the exposure to English has become more intense and pervasive. While English is taught as a foreign language and as a subject in schools, this language is used as a dominant means of communication in the virtual circles. Although the forms of Eng-

lish used in this context may not conform to the standards of ‘proper’ grammar and its use is still mixed with the local language or the national language, English has shifted to be a LWC among young people who have access to the internet. They utter or write chunks of English, taken from phrases in their favorite songs, books or movies.

As the New London Group (1996) envisages designing social futures, a pedagogy of multiliteracies should focus on modes of representation much broader than language alone. In a multimedia environment where particularly our young people function, the audio-visual mode of representation may be much more powerful and closely related to language than "mere literacy" would ever be able to allow. "Multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes."

This paper examines the use of Edmodo as a social media to teach a course in Pedagogy to a class of digital natives. The media is used as an out-of-class communication forum to post/submit assignments and resources, discuss relevant issues, exchange information, and handle housekeeping purposes. The decision to use Edmodo was based on the need to break through the digital divide between the teacher and students and to connect with students beyond class time in digital-natives-friendly ways. The tool has proven to be mutually beneficial for both the teacher and students to help achieve the course objectives.

As Thomas Friedman vividly described in *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, the 21st century is shaking and challenging the very foundations of our society in such monumental ways that the roles of learning and schooling should change accordingly. Students need to be prepared to work in newly emerging fields that require problem solving and critical thinking skills as well as digital literacy skills. It is imperative that educational systems and classroom practices must change to serve our 21st century students better. Schools are compelled to find more effective ways to teach and prepare the young people to survive and thrive in the 21st century knowledge economy.

Promoting the infusion of 21st century skills into education, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has designed a framework that includes the following:

1. Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes

2. Learning and Innovation Skills
3. Information, Media, and Technology Skills
4. Life and Career Skills

Along the same line, the (American) National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS-S) in 2007 were 1) Creativity and Innovation, 2) Communication and Collaboration, 3) Research and Information Literacy, 4) Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making, 5) Digital Citizenship, 6) Tech Operations/Concepts. Accordingly, the NETS for teachers (NETS-T) were 1) Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity, 2) Design Digital-Age Learning Experiences and Assessments, 3) Model Digital-Age Work and Learning, 4) Promote Digital Citizenship and Responsibility, 5) Engage in Professional Growth and Leadership (Schrum & Levin, 2009).

Sharing the learning spaces during this era are digital natives and digital immigrants. The terms "digital immigrants" and "digital natives" were popularized and elaborated upon by Dr. Mark Prensky (2001). Prensky defines digital natives as those who were born between 1980 and 2000 and growing up surrounded by digital media. The digital natives are also known as netizens, Gen Y, or the Millennials. While most of the digital natives are tech-savvy by virtue of their being born around technology, a few of them do not have an inclination for technology and computers, or even an interest to learn more. Enthusiastic digital natives include (but are not limited to) online gamers and those first in line to buy the new Tab, iPad, iPhone or i[next product]. All of them find technology fun, and enjoy the latest developments. Their fingers are glued to their gadgets. In their Net Generation Survey of 7,705 college students in the U.S., Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) found that

- 97% own a computer;
- 94% own a cell phone;
- 76% use instant messaging and social networking sites;
- 15% of IM users are logged on 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- 34% use websites as their primary source of news;
- 28% author a blog and 44% read blogs;
- 49% regularly download music and other media using peer-to-peer file sharing;
- 75% have a Facebook account; and

- 60% own some type of portable music and/or video device such as an iPod.

While “digital natives speak and breathe the language of computers and the culture of the web into which they were born, digital immigrants will never deal with technology as naturally as those who grew up with it” (For a list of further differences between digital natives and digital immigrants, see Zur and Zur, 2012; http://www.zurinstitute.com/digital_divide.html). Generally speaking, the digital natives are less and less prepared to write in a professional manner. This sets them up for digital divide clashes at school where digital immigrant teachers set the tone. Digital immigrant teachers who are used to establishing class rules of sitting nicely, paying undivided attention to lecturing, and no texting in class may be concerned “that the Internet dumbs down the students' minds due to the distractibility effect and the concurrent lack of focus and concentration on non-technical subjects” (Zur and Zur, 2012).

To face the digital divide in class, the digital immigrant teachers have choices. A teacher has an authority and the power to set the tone in class. He or she can choose to cling to traditional practices and teach in ways he or she is comfortable with. Of course, students will seemingly conform to whatever tone or format the teacher has set--*Open and read page 5, Listen to my lecture, Copy what I have written on the board, Memorize that for the test*, etc. The teacher may never be aware of this digital divide and can only complain in the faculty room about the dumbing down of the contemporary generation of students. Another choice for teachers would be to reach out to these millennials and learn to use ways that could serve as the bridge to cross over the digital divide. I have chosen the latter and placed myself as a learner. While teaching a course in Pedagogy, I investigated the following:

1. Does the use of social media for class purposes help motivate students to find their learning processes more relevant?
2. Does the use of social media help students meet the required competence requirements?

METHOD

As a social media specifically designed for education, Edmodo is used as an out-of-class communication forum to post/submit assignments and re-

sources, discuss relevant issues, exchange information, and handle housekeeping purposes. The decision to use Edmodo was based on the need to break through the digital divide between the teacher and students and to connect with students beyond class time in digital-natives-friendly ways.

I have been using Edmodo for my undergraduate and graduate classes as well as professional development groups and consulting projects since early 2011 and set up 18 groups altogether. One of my current classes with Edmodo is a content course, Pedagogy.

The Course

The course is offered for the third semester students. It covers the following topics: reflection of major thoughts in education, theories of learning, and models of teaching and their implication on teaching and learning process, curriculum, school management, and social change. As Standards of Competence, learning participants are expected to understand the purpose of education, the implication and implementation of that purpose in the teaching and learning process. Learners are expected to be able to think critically and analyze philosophical values underlying issues, theories of learning, models of teaching and educational practices.

The class meets 100 minutes a week. Students work in groups and do group presentations in class on an assigned theory of learning or model of teaching. Each group presentation runs 30 minutes and the Q & A 15 minutes. After the group presentation and Q & A, the presenting group receives comments and feedbacks from the teacher and peers. And then sometimes students do further group discussions and at other times listen to the teacher's presentation. The teacher's presentation is mostly to clarify ambiguous points that emerge in the group presentation and discussions, to confirm a few thoughts and points, and to wrap up the lessons learned for the day. Class time seems so limited and runs so fast that the extended discussions on Edmodo help the process further to acquire the basic competences.

The Subjects

There are 22 students in the Pedagogy Class. They are around 18-20 years old. This fact should qualify them as digital natives. To compare their degree of digital nativeness with that of their generation described in many sources and to

know their inclination toward internet technology, I asked them to answer questions in a “How Digitized Are You?” survey (www.surveymonkey.com). After given the notice about the survey in class as well as on Edmodo, 19 students filled in the survey. Here is the subjects’ profile:

- 94.7% own smartphones
- 47.4% spend 1-2 hours a day on the internet. 31.6% spend 2-4 hours
- They use Youtube, Google, Yahoo, and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Edmodo)
- 36.8% use the internet for social media, 26.3% for school assignments, 26.3% for entertainment, and only 5.3% to read the newspaper.
- 36.8% think a class that uses the internet very relevant, 31.6% think it’s extremely relevant, 26.3% think it’s moderately relevant, and 5.3% think it’s not relevant at all.
- 31.6% have between 10-25% teachers who use the internet in their teaching. Another 31.6% find between 50-80% teachers use the internet. 21.1% find between 25-50% teachers use the internet.

It is interesting to note that while almost half of these students think that internet-aided class extremely and very helpful and more than half of them consider classes that use the internet extremely and very relevant, not many of them have had teachers who use the internet in their teaching. This digital divide reality may lead to the estrangement of the teachers from the students and discontinuity in the students’ learning processes.

Data Triangulation

There is a possibility that students’ responses and expressions on Edmodo may be motivated by their need to please the teachers and earn good grades. Postings on Edmodo are identified by the names of the contributors. To increase confidence in the genuineness of students’ evaluative comments, a questionnaire was set in www.surveymonkey.com to find out their experiences and views in using Edmodo in this class. As responses to this questionnaire were anonymous and done individually online, they would be relatively free of extrinsic motives. Below are the responses from the survey:

- Nineteen out of twenty-two students filled in the survey.

- Eighteen students love the experience of using Edmodo in class and find it relevant to their daily lives.
- 42.1% think using the social media extremely helpful in meeting the required competences, 47.4% think it's very helpful, 10.5% think it's moderately helpful, and none thinks it's not helpful at all.

In addition, the standard evaluation questionnaire set by the university was also used as a tool of data triangulation. Not only was the questionnaire anonymous, it was also administered by student organization (*BEM*) without the presence of the teacher and sent directly to the registrar for tabulation. A summary of the results are sent to teachers in the beginning of the next semester. Below are some of the results:

- Twenty out of twenty-two students filled in the questionnaires (only those twenty students were present on the last day of class).
- Twelve of them strongly agree that the teacher is able to deliver all the course topics effectively that they understand the materials well. Eight students agree.
- Fifteen students strongly agree that the teacher is able to give relevant illustration of the concepts. Five agree.
- Thirteen students strongly agree that the teacher is able to relate the course topics with application in the workplace. Seven agree.
- Twenty students strongly agree that the teacher makes a good use of media and technology to achieve the required competences.

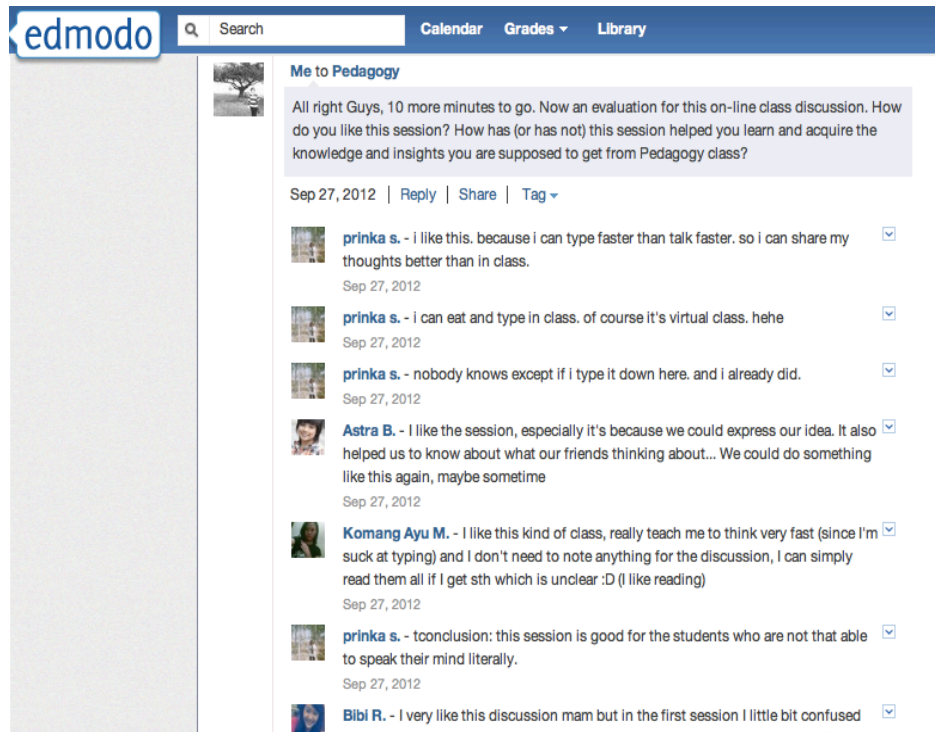
The data revealed in two anonymous surveys through www.surveymonkey.com and the standard teacher performance evaluation conducted by the university are consistently in line with the findings through Edmodo.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

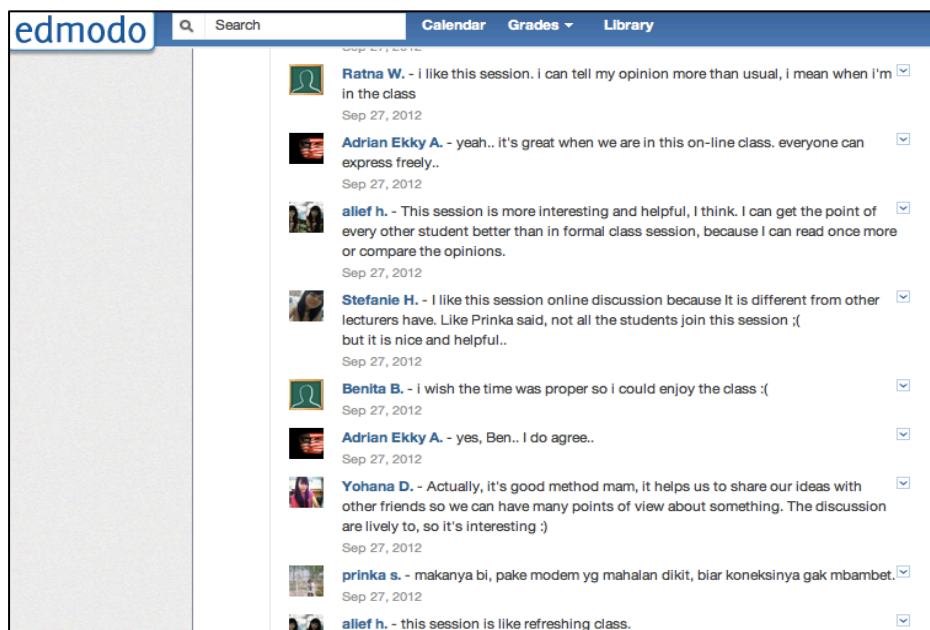
As explained before, the use of Edmodo in this class is to provide an out-of-class communication forum to post/submit assignments and resources, discuss relevant issues, exchange information, and handle housekeeping purposes. It has been a highly useful tool that enables a mobile work system. Posting assignments, reading and grading their assignments, uploading resources can be

done anywhere. There's no more misplaced paper as Edmodo helps organize the calendar, students' papers, and grades.

As an out-of-class communication forum, this tool also enables extended discussions when time in class is not sufficient. Once, a class session had to be cancelled because of a *Dies Natalis* ceremony. It was difficult to find a convenient time for everyone for a make-up class on campus. Edmodo provided the solution and we had an on-line class discussion one evening. Students loved the process very much. Here are their evaluations on the process:

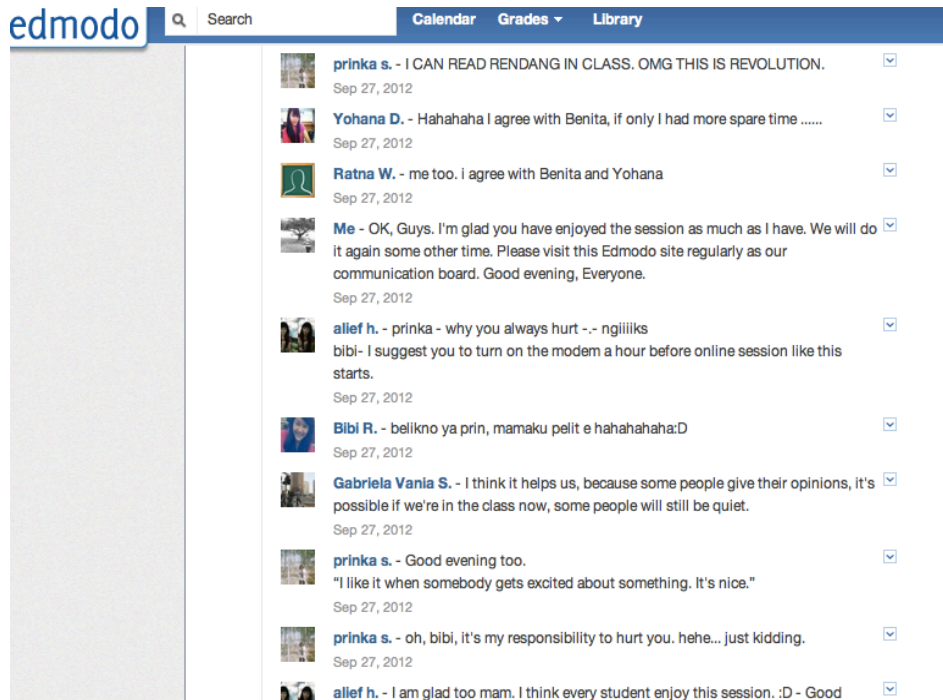


Throughout the process, I have discovered insights on these millennials, their ways of acquiring knowledge, and more effective ways to teach less and let them learn more. In comparison with regular class sessions, they can express their thoughts more freely. Here are what they say:



Compared to a regular class meeting, one advantage of an online class discussion on Edmodo is the distinction between attendance and participation. In a regular class meeting, many students usually attend the meeting and are given credit for their attendance in their class roll although they may not be participating and contributing to the class discussions. Some students may be physically present in class but not mentally and emotionally. During an online discussion, students have to participate and contribute to the discussion to be considered present.

Another advantage is that a few students who are usually shy in class can open up and express themselves more freely when they are on-line. More students participate and contribute their thoughts in an online discussion than in a regular classroom meeting. Technically, it is impossible to have every student speak in a content course. The limited time just does not allow that. The nature of an online class discussion enables all students to write simultaneously and read each other's postings. These digital natives' level of comfort in expressing themselves through this mode and in interacting with their peers also brought in their typical little mischief when they picked on each other:



In regard of the quality of their interaction and participation, students have a little bit more time to think through their responses in an online discussion than in a regular classroom discussion. In the context of foreign language teaching and learning, this chance to think through their sentences helps them improve their critical thinking and writing skills. This Edmodo discussion does not replace class discussions, only extends and complements it. While the regular class discussions give them the opportunities to enhance their speaking skills, the online sessions allow them to use their reading and writing skills.

Two of the four expected competences and learning outcomes for the course are 3) analyzing philosophical values in models of teaching and 4) thinking independently and critically and analyzing models of teaching in relation to school practices. I assigned them to watch *Dead Poets Society*, analyze the opposing models of teaching in the movie and identify the philosophical values underlying those models.



Me to Pedagogy

How did you like the movie Dead Poets Society? What philosophy of education did Mr. Keating practice? How about the school? In what ways did Mr. Keating conflict with the school authority?

Sep 27, 2012 | Reply | Share | Tag ▾



Yohana D. - Mam, should I write this on word or I just post in here as a reply? ▾

Sep 27, 2012

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Kirana H. - I think it's a fabulous movie I've ever seen before about education system because I can learn many things from that movie. we can give our opinion about what we want to in our life. we can express our idea in the education process. besides that, I Agree with Mr. keating education system because it makes us enjoy and comfortable when we're in the class and study something. sometimes, the curriculums system of the school like that movie is not always right and suitable with the students. it can make the students is not brave to give their opinion. ▾

Sep 27, 2012



Type a reply...



Me to Pedagogy, MPBI 17

Please read this article



What do our students need to learn? | The Jakarta Post

m.thejakartapost.com

Online discussions also enable the teacher to lead the course material to more personal relevance for the students and to bring about discussions on moral judgments. The following two exhibits show students' responses on personal relevance and their evaluation on issues pertaining to moral responsibilities as a result of teaching practices and models of teaching.

Me to Pedagogy

When/if you become a teacher, what kind of a teacher are you going to be? How has Mr. Keating (or any other great teacher you know) inspired you? Or are you going to be a different teacher from Mr. Keating? What aspects will you take from him and what will you leave out?

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Ratna W. - he teaches through experience. students have to feel free to show their feeling. if i'm going to be a teacher maybe i would be like him. but, i will tell my students that they just need to take the good side and think about it carefully. not gulp it all without thinking

Sep 27, 2012

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Kirana H. - Hmm... I feel a bit confuse to choose what kind of teacher I want to be. Mr. keating teach me that a teacher have to know what her/his students want. I will give my students to chance to express their ideas or dreams.

Sep 27, 2012

Me to Pedagogy

Do you think Mr. Keating is responsible for the suicide of Neal? Why or why not?

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Adrian Ekky A. - I think no.. because his parents should be responsible with the suicide.. Actually his father should be responsible with it, he was very angry and force Neal to go to military and doctor school. The second, his father didn't want to see and want to know what Neal want... he just wanted to force his dream..

Sep 27, 2012

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Bibi R. - I think isn't Mr. Keating's fault because he only gives Neil more suggested to ask his dream with his father.I also agree with Benita's opinion:)

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A tool is just a tool. It is waiting to be used and explored. As a social media tool designed specifically for education purposes, Edmodo creates a complete 21st Century learning space (for more ideas in using Edmodo, see Hewes, 2012). Thus far, this 21st Century learning space has been very effective in helping deliver the content course in Pedagogy and achieve the learning outcomes. When using Edmodo as a tool to assist my teaching, I'm attempting to apply the principles of great teaching as promoted by Robyn Jackson (2009).

The first and most important principle is to start where your students are. "Knowing your students means more than knowing their demographics or test scores. It means recognizing what currency they have and value and then using

that currency to help them acquire the capital of the classroom” (Jackson, 2009). The capital of the classroom is the knowledge and skills that will lead them to achieve their competence. The currency the digital native students value at the moment is what this era has to offer for them: the abundance of resources and the freedom to explore their world. Using Edmodo as a social media tool enables me to start where my students are and use the currency they value. Furthermore, positioning myself as a learner in the use of technology and sometimes requesting students to teach me certain applications serves as modeling to be a life-long learner. In addition, the existing technological tools (Edmodo, YouTube, Google, Wikis) make it possible for me as a teacher to teach less and let my students learn more.

Not all students participate actively in Edmodo. As Zur and Zur (2012) notices, not all digital natives are created equal. Not all of my students have Facebook and Twitter accounts, use Google to search for information, use Skype, shop online, and network through social media. During the first class meeting, I introduced the syllabus and informed them about using Edmodo as our communication board. Most students looked enthusiastic but a couple of them showed discomfort and anxiety. While the technology invasion is ubiquitous for this millennial generation, it is not right to assume that every young person has an inclination toward the internet technology and to neglect their anxiety.

Reviewing the five standards for teachers (NETS-T), I am able to 1) facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity (students in my other course have uploaded their own poetry recitals on YouTube), 2) design digital-age learning experiences and assessments, and 3) model digital-age work and learning. The last two standards are yet to be explored and achieved. Many students use the internet for social media, entertainment, and school assignments. Very few use it to read newspaper or access and generate knowledge beyond assignments. Their use of social media needs to be further enhanced so that it can enable them to demonstrate more responsibility and make more contribution as digital citizens. Finally, I have not had and taken much time to engage in more serious and systematic professional growth through the internet, particularly networking with other educators.

Incorporating digital literacy in education involves methodology and design. As part of methodology, tools such as Edmodo work effectively as a bridge to cross over the digital divide and reach out to the digital native students. There is still room for improvement in the use of technology tools in de-

signing and delivering appropriate content to achieve what Prensky calls digital wisdom. Digital literacy should make us not only smarter but also wiser. “Digital wisdom is a two-fold concept, referring both to wisdom arising from the use of digital technology to access cognitive power beyond our usual capacity and to wisdom in the use of technology to enhance our innate capabilities” (Prensky, 2012).

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