

SOCIAL FORUM FOR VIT BHOPAL STUDENTS

An Engineering Project in Community Service

Phase – II Report

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Bonafide Certificate

Certified that this project report titled “**Social Forum for VIT Bhopal Students**” is the bonafide work of “19BCY10025 Eshaan Bahuguna, 19BCY10168 Asmi Bhardwaj, 19BCY10076 Parth Sarthi Dubey, 19BCE10394 Atul Sharma, 19BCE10163 Rahul Rathore, 19BEE10025 Dheerendra Kumar, 19BEC10046 Sandeep Kumar Gadari, 19BEE10027 Radhika Gurjar” who carried out the project work under my supervision.

This project report (Phase II) is submitted for the Project Viva-Voce examination held on

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| Sl. No. | Topic | Page No. |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Introduction | 4 |
| 1.1 | Motivation | 5 |
| 1.2 | Objective | 5 |
| 2. | Existing Work | 6 |
| 3. | Topic of the work | 8 |
| | a) System Architecture | 8 |
| | b) Working Principle | 9 |
| | c)Results and Discussion | 10 |
| | d)Individual Contribution by members | 11 |
| 4. | Conclusion | 11 |

1. INTRODUCTION

Can human interaction over the internet be personally and socially transformative? The introduction of new, disruptive technology is always accompanied by a deep suspicion. Internet-based interaction have focused primarily on individual well-being, largely ignoring the potential benefits at more inclusive levels of analysis (community and society). One of the key benefits of online interaction has been overlooked by researchers: its potential to contribute to increased engagement with civic activities.

Social psychology has found that people join groups in general for both feelings of affiliation and belonging as well as for information and aid in goal achievement. Inclusion in face-to-face groups gives individuals information as well as self-identity, values, attitudes, and notions of accepted behaviors. For similar reasons, people also seek to join groups of others in the online environment of virtual communities. The research data here suggest that people visit virtual communities because of the opportunities it creates to exchange information. Depending on the overall category of the virtual community, social support or friendships are also popular reasons for joining a virtual community. Brought into perspective of society at large, the frequency of each of these categories is intriguing, especially with regard to friendship.

Online forums have been in existence for many years, and indeed predate the internet. Although seemingly eclipsed in the past decade by social networking sites such as Facebook, forums are still regularly used by around 20% of online users in the US, and about 10% of online users in the UK, attesting to the value that users continue to derive from them. This value may stem, at least in part, from the fact that forums represent one of the few remaining spaces online that afford the user the potential for anonymous interaction.

Forums offer something different and their potential to provide social capital and effect related off-line civic activity remains a largely untapped force, and one that is in danger of being eclipsed by their larger, and more seductive contemporary social networking cousins. If this should happen, we would consider it a shame. The need for forums has certainly not decreased, and forum providers should be actively promoting the benefits of forum use more widely and energetically. The uninitiated may yet need convincing, but converted, committed and active users already know that forums can transform lives. In the words of [Radin](#) , the forum formula

“...succeeds in transforming many casual visitors into people who wholeheartedly contribute to the community...by their very existence, [online forums] are planting the seeds of revolution.”

1.1 Motivation

While a forum may be full of people who are different in most other ways, by starting from a place of having something compelling in common, they can often find value in each other's company. Students face a lot of problems and the means at which they communicate with one another to deliberate on a solution. That's why there is need for the provision of an efficient and easy way student can actually relate with each other so as to harness the strength in teaming up while solving academic problems, also most of the problems some students are actually facing has been solved before by someone else, so developing an online student discussion forum is actually the very solution students need as it even allows student to reach each other even from their own comfort zone, anywhere anytime. There has been lack of a platform that enables the students of our college to connect to one another and share their knowledge.

We've noticed four common factors that drive people's use of forums:

- **Anonymity:** It is important for many. You choose any username you like and only share what you want to. It's much less personal, which allows people to be much more intimate. No one knows who you are or where you're from – which gives you the freedom to be much more open, unguarded and honest than 'in real life'.
- **Similarity:** Successful forums work because they reflect the interests and needs of the people who use them. We like 'people like us'. We feel a shared connection, a sense of trust and understanding.
- **Specificity:** Forums let us share very specific parts of our lives or questions we have with others. It allows us to ask very specific questions to people who are likely to know what you mean and how to answer.
- **Connectivity:** When our immediate network can't help, forums connect us to strangers who understand what we're talking about, how we feel and what we need. It's a North Star, guiding those on a similar journey to the same path.
- **Friendship:** It tends to be easier to get on with people like us. Forums make this happen. We've seen loads of examples of threads lighting up with people jumping into conversations to support each other.

1.2 Objective

To make a social platform and host it on a server that enables the students to post their questions that they have regarding academics and are notified of the events going on around the campus. Members can post their questions or discussion prompts and reply to each other. To also give them the ability to download the material for any subject that they might require.

2. Existing Work / Literature Review

Increasing class sizes, reducing resources, and widening diversity of students' cohorts have all placed demands on higher education and stimulated them to explore new pedagogies. Identifying the most successful use of technology tools available in higher education and deploying them effectively in the classroom in order to improve student learning are now an important research issue facing accounting education. In that context, using an asynchronous medium for learning has now become a significant component of course delivery in higher education. Higher educational institutions have started adopting hybrid or blended models of education that combine classroom and asynchronous and distributed learning environments. Driven by an increasingly competitive higher educational environment, these hybrid models have resulted in the convergence of the traditional classroom and online learning modes combining the strengths of face-to-face and online learning modes of learning and have become one of the key responses to changing higher educational climate.

Online discussion forums are considered an extension of traditional learning that promotes dialogue, reflection, knowledge construction, and self-assessment. Given their potential benefits, online discussion forums have been widely adopted as tools for online learning. Online discussions have the potential to improve students critical thinking and problem-solving skills, decision-making ability, and written communication skills and contribute to students' ability to organize and analyze information. Combining the online discussion forum with a case study method, a common pedagogical technique used in many business schools, is considered to be an effective method that encourages students to relate theory to practice. Many academics therefore have started using online discussion forums for teaching via the case method. While learning goals of online case discussions and face-to-face case discussions are generally the same, there is relatively little research focusing on the online case-method pedagogy and assessment in business and accounting education.

Effects of these hybrid models of learning that combine traditional classroom case study pedagogy with the asynchronous media such as online discussion forums on Learning outcomes and processes are, however, not well understood. With the widespread adoption of course management systems (CMS) and learning management systems (LMS) by academic institutions being a recent phenomenon, further studies to offer insights into the current and future directions of this field are necessary.

Two studies have examined how students perceive online case method pedagogy in business education. According to a study by Jonassen and Kwon, perceived students' satisfaction and perceived quality of the discussion process and outcomes were higher for members of the online group when compared with face-to-face groups. They observed that online groups went through more cycles of the ideal problem-solving process which involves defining the problem, orienting the discussion, and developing a solution. Their study found that online groups produced less amount of verbal interaction than their face-to-face counterparts. In another study, Webb et al. compared groups working with different "doses" of online components in case method instruction from purely online to purely face-to-face. According to them, members that were under heavy online conditions have more positive perceptions of peer interaction during the discussion than others, and they have outperformed the face-to-face students in

terms of conceptual and factual knowledge about the case discussed. These findings must be treated with caution because of the differences in the cases and topics taught to these different groups. Further, it is possible that the newly developed online skills rather than an increasing dose of online discussion may have contributed to these positive findings.

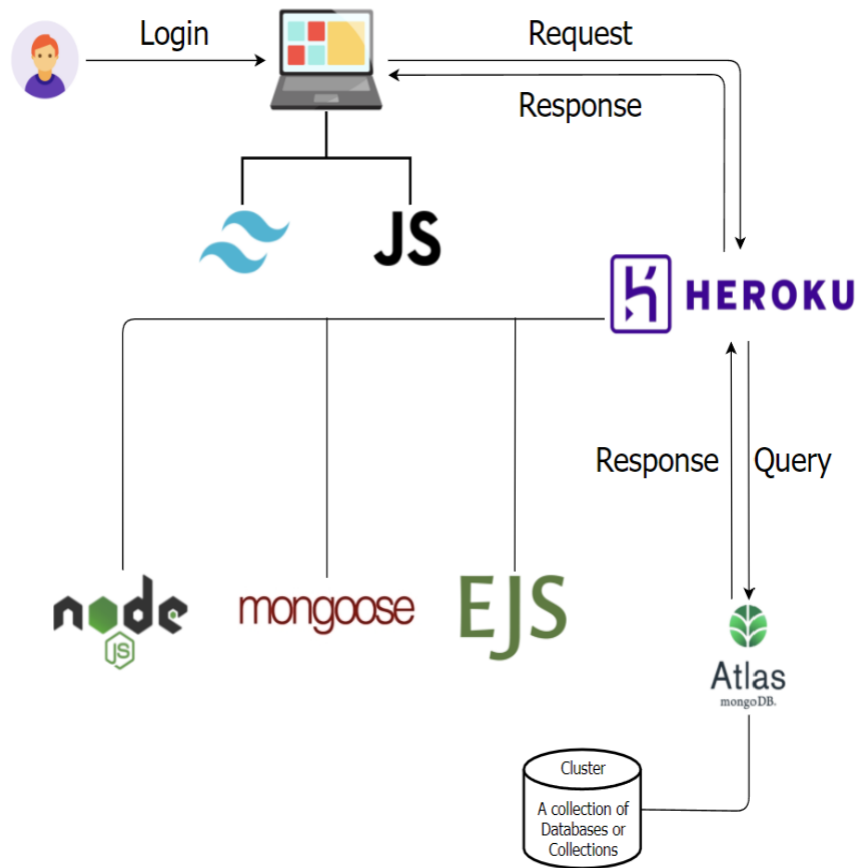
Threaded forums are one of the most commonly used environments for online discussion, and, though well supported by learning theories, several limitations are identified by researchers. Excessive focus on new posts, overlapping exchanges and hierarchical structure of discussion threads, and lack of timely feedback are some of the problems reducing the opportunities for meaningful reflection, social interaction, and knowledge construction. Researchers have suggested improvements to the guidelines and instructions to students, developing online activities to engage learners, adopting teaching or moderating strategies, and enhancing the design of environments to encourage good discussion.

Even though learning through online discussion forums was studied by several researchers as shown above, research that focuses on the online case-method pedagogy and assessment is limited. Further, findings on the effectiveness of online discussion forums are also inconsistent and depend on the nature of discussion environments. Online discussion forum is just another technology enabled tool and the principles of technology acceptance, usability, ease of use, and so forth, will be equally applicable here. The availability of tool does not necessarily mean that students (users) will use it or perceive it as useful, and the learning effectiveness is influenced by other external factors such as incentives to participate, perceived value of those tools, moderator's skills, quality of the discussion environment, and past experience of the students in using those tools. Factors such as structure of the online environment, prior ability of students, facilitator's style, and participation, however, may have some influence on the quality of the discussion and the outcomes. Though best practices and strategies and effective design environments were suggested, there were no studies that measured the effectiveness of the design and delivery of online case discussion and assessment in a business school context.

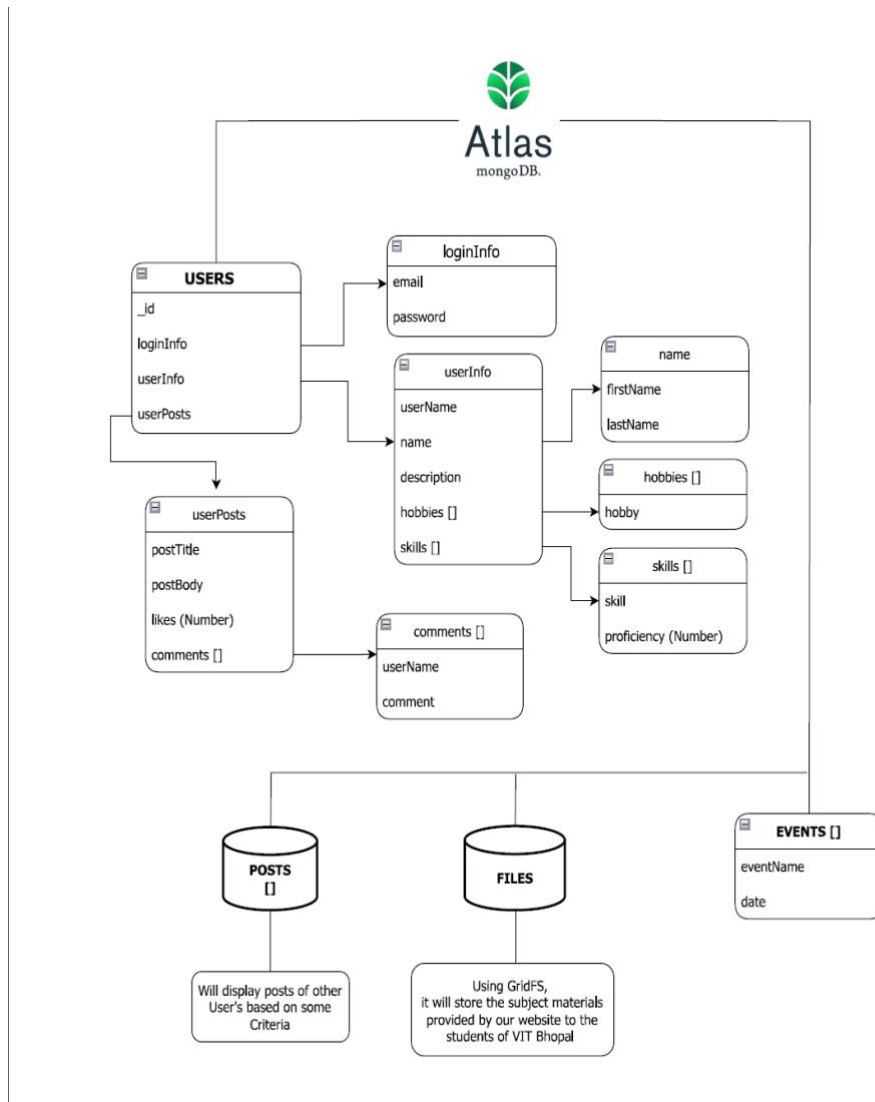
Lack of participation by a majority and dominance of a few handful students are the main challenge in asynchronous discussion forums. The consequent fear of losing marks may constrain their interaction to some extent; grading may actually encourage students to participate in the discussion with due consideration and adequate preparation. An effective learning environment and assessment must be carefully designed without unwittingly discouraging the motivation for learning. Even though collaborative learning is critically important, and that the technology is a powerful enabler that matches what is needed for discussion and collaboration, the extent to which asynchronous discussion forums succeeded in enabling learning is not known and lacks sufficient empirical evidence where a case study assessment is incorporated.

3. Topic of the work

a) System Design / Architecture



System Architectre/Working Modules



b) Working Principle

The project titled “SOCIAL FORUM FOR VIT BHOPAL” is designed using NODE JS as the server-side scripting language and MONGODB as the DATABASE. The project contains seven main modules.

- Category
- Post Question
- Answer/Reply
- Events
- Materials
- Search
- About me and Skills

Category Module:

This module is the main module, by selecting the category users can post their questions easily. They can retrieve the answers for their questions from the different users.

Post Question Module:

This module is mainly for the registered users. As the Administrator has to know who has posted the questions the user is registered here. These registered users alone can post their question in a detailed manner.

Events Module:

Users can see the upcoming events happening in the college by going through this section.

Materials Module:

Users can use this module to check and download subject materials of their respective subjects.

Search Module:

This module is used to search their queries, the articles and also the inventions. Both registered and non-registered users can search over here.

About me and Skills Module:

Users can use this section of the website to showcase their skills as well as things about themselves.

c) Results and Discussion

The website, once implemented correctly with all of its moving parts working in harmony, will enable its users to not only interact with one another but also share and acquire knowledge.

They will also have access to resources they might require in their college life by using the Materials section of the website.

The users will be notified of any upcoming events happening in the college.

The developers of the website need to look into a system of how potential abusive behavior can be mitigated and a healthy environment can be sustained.

d) Individual Contribution

1. Working on the development of the project as a team member.
2. Managing and help in designing part.
3. Learnt about all of the technologies that will be used in our project.
4. The technologies learnt include are as follows-
 - HTML5/CSS3
 - Adobe XD

4. CONCLUSION

1. Looked into the working of the web application and how the individual modules will be interacting with one another.
2. Learned about Tailwind CSS framework which will help in the development of the UI of our Web Application.
3. Learned about how Node.js server is implemented by using Express and EJS.
4. Learned about Mongoose which connects the Node.js application to MongoDB database.
5. Looked into the deployment of a Web Application in the real world by working with Heroku.
6. Learned about Mongo Atlas which enables us to host our database onto a remote server.

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