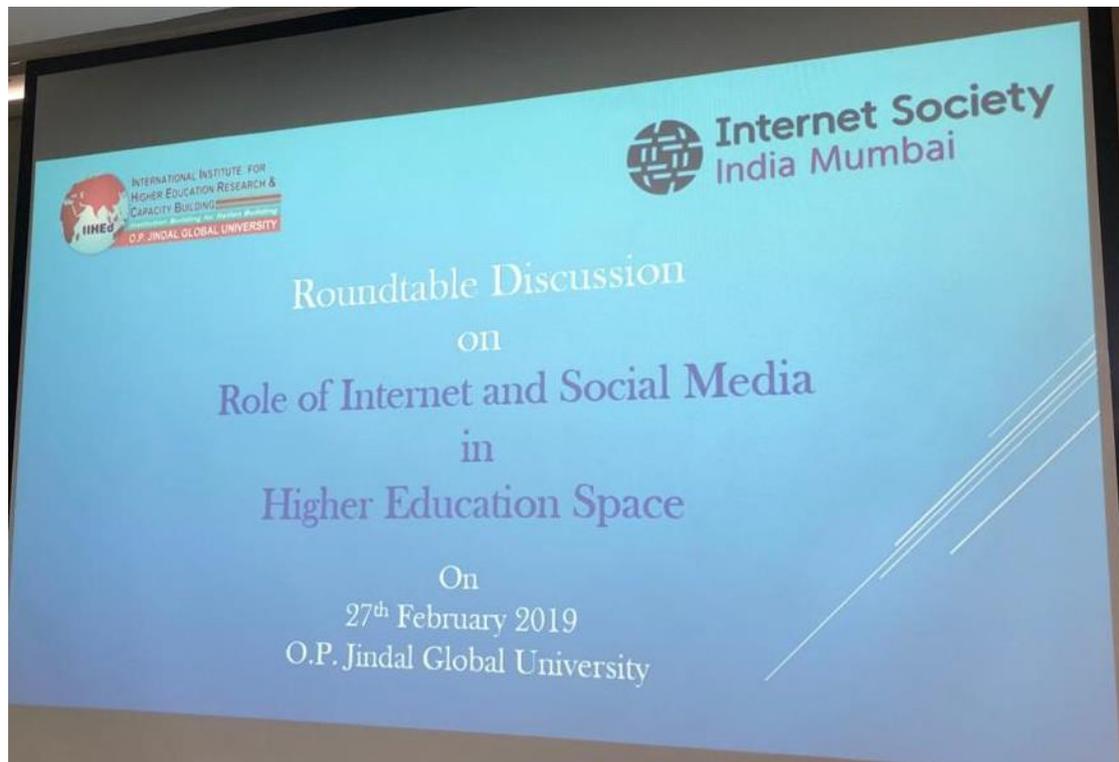*International Institute for Higher Education Research & Capacity Building (IIHEd), and Internet Society India Mumbai*

Report

on

The Roundtable Discussion on "*Role of Internet and Social Media in Higher Education***"**
February 27, 2019
1.30 pm-3.00 pm
O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana

The event was organised and moderated by **Ms. Nandita Koshal,** Research Associate, International Institute for Higher Education (IIHEd), O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) and Treasurer, Internet Society (ISOC), India Mumbai Chapter. The panellists for the Roundtable discussion were drawn from the key schools, institutes and departments of JGU. The multi-stakeholder discussion saw liberal exchange of ideas and sharing of multitude perspectives.

The discussion was opened by Ms. Nandita Koshal, where, in her introductory remarks, she emphasised upon the role of Internet and social media in the administration of the higher education institutes (HEI's), apart from the academics and research. She steered the discussion towards the myriad of ways in which

Internet and social media tools are fast becoming an integral part of HE space and opened the floor to the panellists to enrich the discussion with their views.

Ms. Shivangi Gangwar, Research Associate, Jindal Global Law School and an LLM from the University of Chicago, USA talked about the role of Internet and social media in classroom teaching and learning. She pointed out that Internet plays an important role in teaching, especially when accessing online resources such as judgment and article databases such as Manupatra, SCC Online, JStor and Westlaw, among others. Tools like Google Docs are very beneficial and efficient, wherein all the students in a class can make and update notes, in real time, while the lecture is ongoing. At the same time, she felt that social media is not necessary to use in a law classroom, which still predominantly applies traditional teaching methodology. It may bring an issue into focus but it does not form an essential part of the way subjects are taught in law schools across India.

Mr. Deepak Maun, Assistant Professor of Practices, IIHEd, JGU, pursuing a Ph.D from IIM Ahmedabad, also presented his views on role of Internet and social media in teaching and learning. He began by stressing the difference between the social media and Internet. He pointed out that social media directly relates to the public platform, which is not necessary in the classroom, whereas Internet could be used as a learning tool for students. As someone who teaches both management and law students, he shared his experiences of using MS Management software like MS Teams as an interface for teacher-student interaction, apart from traditional modes like emails and WhatsApp. He believes that more students need to be encouraged to use such online systems. He recognises the role of Internet in education but he believes that its active use in classroom by students would remain contestable till the time they actually use it.

Mr. Akhil Pruthi, Joint Director, Strategy, JGU and an MBA graduate from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and ISB, Hyderabad, mentioned in his presentation that students today behave like

"consumers", expecting a full "assessment" of higher education institutes before they decide to "invest" in them and take admission. He emphasised the importance of branding, building reputation and recognition of HEI among various stakeholders like parents, students and schools. In this context, he recognised the instrumental role played by social media in building the brand value. He talked about how presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and webpages can increase the visibility of an institution. It is important to leverage the power of 'hashtags' and 'influencers' to create a reputation for an institution. This "reputation" not only helps in attracting more students and talented faculty to the HEIs but also eases the process of getting grants for academic research. Reputation building is also important from the perspective of featuring in top academic ranking surveys. Social Media also aids in stakeholder engagement as not all PR material is accessible through the website. He also showcased how tools like 'Meltwater', 'Google Trends' present a comparative 'Social Network Analysis' between various HEIs and show how the activities on social media affect their 'popularity and perception'. He concluded by stressing on the necessity of creating "social media strategy" and importance of creating a brand on the basis of academic and research excellence through the various social media platforms in order to get global recognition.

Mr. Abhinav Madan, Joint Director, Office of Institutional Transformation JGU, and an MBA graduate from ISB Hyderabad, focussed his talk on the role of Internet and social media in research in academia. He reflected that Internet has had a positive impact on overall research ecosystem by making research articles accessible through tools like 'Open access journals', 'Google Scholars' and connecting scholars through 'Academia','Research Gate' amongst others. However, academia is still resistant towards social media and Internet as it is difficult to assess the quality of the research work. Most of the times researchers are not aware about the tools that are available to promote their work. He concluded that, in spite of certain downsides, the importance of global platforms (Internet and social media) to access and exchange information in academia cannot be undermined.

Dr. Mousumi Mukherjee, Assistant Director and Assistant Professor, IIHEd, and Ph.D. from the University of Melbourne, Australia continued the narrative on the role of Internet and social media in research in academia. She recognised the importance of Internet in collaborating with fellow researchers and accessing e-resources from university libraries across the geographies. However, she expressed her concern regarding the quality of research publications available on the Internet. She also shared her concern on how the Internet platforms show more interest towards quantitative instead of qualitative research. Thus, while Internet has given new impetus to research, its impact on quality of research is debatable.

Ms. Anshu Gupta, Assistant Manager, Admissions and Outreach, JGU and an LLM graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, USA shared her perspectives on the role of Internet and social media in attracting students for admissions. She highlighted how Internet and social media are emerging as an "alternate source of information" for students and parents. Just having an official website for HEI is no longer sufficient. A large scale presence on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and blogs play an important role in influencing the students' decision in adding an institution as a part of their identity. She felt that students are more interested in knowing the "success stories", "achievements", "celebrated faculty" and "international collaborations" of the institutions. Universities can build stories around such achievements and popularise them using social media. She concluded by emphasising that populating the social media with such videos and stories help in enhancing the visibility of an institution and hence play an important role in attracting students.

Mr. Amit Malik, Junior Manager, Office of Strategic Initiatives and Institutional Research (OSIIR), JGU and a Mass communication graduate from MCU, Bhopal, India, shared his views on the role of Internet and social media as an integral part of an institution's strategic vision. He pointed out how institutions are heavily dependent on Internet and Information Technology tools like Outlook for their daily effective communication between faculty and students, between departments, and the dissemination of information

regarding opportunities and events. He talked about how these resources help in increasing productivity, reducing labour costs, providing customised solutions, maintaining an effective flow of information and in maintaining databases. He also spoke about how creating virtual campus tours help attract the higher education aspirants. He mentioned how 'cloud based services' help students and faculty in storing their data. He revealed how in a survey conducted on usefulness of Social Media, 57% students responded positively on how social media is helping them in academic pursuits.

Mr. Amit Lahiri, Associate Director, IIHEd; Chief Sustainability Officer, JGU and a post graduate from the York University, Canada concluded the discussion by stating how Internet has the "capacity to collaborate". He reiterated how HEI should be a strong mediator to convert education into an actionable use and how Internet plays an important role in this collaboration. He talked about the significance of social media and Internet in the processes of international and industrial collaboration. He ended the session with these profound lines: "Internet is a collaborative tool which collapses geographies, time and space and social media is a tool which puts it on a world map".

The Vote of Thanks was delivered by **Ms. Nandita Koshal** to all the panellists and to the rapporteurs for the discussion; Mr. Raju Karjigi and Mr. Ashirwad Thomas, from OSIIR, JGU**.** The discussion concluded at 3 pm.

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