

**CMSC 818G - Information Centric Design for Systems  
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**Initial Write-up**

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***Introduction***

Education is considered one of the most important aspects that affect people's life in a direct manner, as getting better education helps in polishing people's skills and enhancing the level of communication among them. Recently, Information technology has played an important role in the field of education through enhancing the infrastructure and providing technical tools that ease the whole process. One of the major problems that haven't been tackled thoroughly is the potential use of information technology in spreading education rather than enhancing it. One of the reasons behind that problem is that it depends mainly on the human resources, which are usually either scarce or not properly managed or distributed.

In our work, we plan to tackle this problem and investigate the possible uses of information technology in order to help spreading literacy among people, especially in the developing countries. One possible approach is to make use of the wide spread of online social networks and benefit from the vast diversity present there to try to direct the people who are willing to help, to the ones that actually need it. Thus, trying to achieve better distribution and management of the critical resource in the educational process, and in the same time reach out for more people who lack proper education.

***Motivation***

*Consider the following facts:*

- 50% of the children of India in the age group of 6-14 years are still denied primary education – Source: 7th All India Education Survey, 2002, 5th Education Survey NCERT
- UNESCO has the goal of achieving literacy for all by 2015
- Cell phone subscriptions in developing countries have risen to 1.4 billion by the end of 2005 (as against 800,000 in advanced countries)
- \$20 laptops in India in the near future with basic amenities including web connectivity

In spite of major investments in the field of primary education by Government and Non Government Organizations, the goal seems far from achievable. This is mainly due to the absence of “competent” human resources - Teachers and Management thereby inhibiting the spread of literacy. We believe technology can provide the solution to this problem. Online Tutoring, where a person from anywhere in the world will be able to communicate with students in need of tutoring, without a need to travel presents a viable solution to the problem of human resources. In this semester, we would like to explore some common platforms for online tutoring.

These facts prove the ability of technology to proliferate to the very nooks and corners of the world. Further, the proposed launch of \$20 laptops and availability of cheaper cell phones with advance features such as web access unleashes a range of possibilities in terms of applications and uses. Thus reaching out to the masses using technology in developing and under-developed countries for a philanthropic cause is no longer a far-fetched idea.

### ***Objective***

With the ever-increasing popularity of the social networking websites, like facebook; the knowledge and the intelligence of the users (who would be spending some of their leisure time online) can be tapped to teach someone in the world who cannot afford private tutoring or needs some extra help.

### ***Description***

This project revolves around two entities – student and tutor who are logged in as users and can interact real-time in an ad-hoc fashion via a facebook application.

### ***Future Scope***

The extension of the application to more social networking sites while making it available as a stand-alone website. Adding various features not limited to online tutoring and making them accessible through a cell phone application without the need for a web browser.