Teacher-Student Online Relationship

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Abstract
While a typical answer to the question “Should students and teachers be allowed to interact online?” is often a finite “yes” or “no”, a closer investigation reveals that the issue is far from being clear-cut, being deeply tied to one's cultural and regional background. Our goal was to find out the challenges that teachers and students face when developing online relationships in social networks. We carried out a literature review and a study among students and teachers in Estonia, and also included foreigners with academic or ICT background from different countries. Results show various interactions between students and teachers in academic field using personal social networks. At the same time there are teachers and students who feel that there should be another way to tackle this issue, e.g. by using academic social networks or learning tools rather than Facebook. Some schools feel that the situation is already clear, and there are no need for regulations or suggestions - the teachers just should not mingle with students, so they discourage all kinds of interaction, offline and online. Their reasoning is based on the notion that students have a private life and teachers should not spy after them online. For the solution we propose that teachers should think before accepting students to their personal social networks. Also, academic environments should be separated from the personal ones. We advise using special academic social networks, blogs, wikis rather than the most popular generic ones.

Keywords
Student-teacher relationship, online behaviour, social network, internet safety

Biographies
Birgy Lorenz is a PhD student from Tallinn University, Estonia (syllabus Information Society Technologies). She is also eSafety trainer in Estonia in a program Safer Internet in Estonia. Her activities include being part of developing National Curricula ICT syllabus, writing articles about e-safety, project management in TurvaLan project that has been awarded by: Microsoft (2009): European Schoolnet (2010): 1st eLearning Award, in ‘Internet Safety’ category. Teacher of the year in Estonia (2011).
Aare Klooster is a PhD student from Tallinn University, Estonia (syllabus Information Society Technologies). He is worked for over 14 years as a teacher and ICT development manager in the Tallinn School of Economics. He is the founder of Estonian Computer Club NGO and Network of Estonian Teachers of Informatics and Computer Science starter of LanParty culture in Estonia 1999. He is also a software developer. His academic interest involves cyber security and social manipulation.

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