



# Using Social Media in Pre-service Teacher Education ELT Methodology Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

Use of technology in teacher education has reportedly increased participation of the teacher trainees in the learning process. Use of smart phones and Interactive white boards (IWBs) and Edmodo learning platform has brought this change to the learning atmosphere. The trainees are constant users of the smart phone and this is employed first to surf the internet to watch videos, search Google for information on authors, subject content and definitions of terms. This simple beginning provided initiative to next giant strides of success. The teacher trainees set up learning support groups via famous social media platforms like 'WhatsApp' and Viber. The trainers upload documents and assignment tasks via this media where the trainees could view them during lessons for reference. This saved time and energy where the trainees could refer to multiple materials simultaneously without having to make printed copies of them. Further, they could post questions to the group and seek trainers advice on certain issues that come-up in the process of self-learning. Consequently, new leaders have begun to emerge in the virtual space who promote discussions on complicated subject matter and promote peer – learning. The IWBs provided another sphere to the face-to-face learning classroom. The potential if the IWB as an interactive learning space promote the learners' engagement in the subject otherwise dominated by less interactive mode of delivery. Edmodo is a free software, which promotes learning providing the trainer and the learner to engage in the virtual space. The trainer can create learner-profiles and join them to a group, sharing subject matter. Most importantly, the use of technology provides the opportunity to meet the learners in the virtual space and enable the learners to engage in self-learning which promotes deep learning skills.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the increasing rate of recruitment of teacher trainees for the National Colleges of Education, the volume of co-curricular and extra curricular activities are being increased. As a result, completing the syllabi and the pace of the teaching and learning of academic courses require great attention. Use of virtual space is an alternative to reduce the time constraints experience by the trainees and trainers in organizing face to face meetings. Major universities and other educational institutions world over use different software to connect the academics with their learners providing them a platform to discuss matters arising from the learning and teaching process. This enables the trainers to use variety of teaching and learning materials to facilitate the diverse nature of learning of the student population. Amidst these changes funding constraints and ever-growing student/staff ratios and workloads have amounted pressure on both the students and the practitioners. The students are subjected to learning pressures (Biggs & Tang, 2011) derived from the amount and variety of reading they are required to undertake and the assessment tasks they are expected to engage in compared to the time they are expected to commit to their studies. To these have added the pressures from high stake summative assessments where the trainees would experience a set back due to the lack of rote learning that they required to do. Similarly, demands are placed on practitioners on providing timely feedback (Carless, 2007) despite the increasing numbers in the classes. In addition, the disparity among the student abilities within a class, their academic orientation and the commitment have caused teaching related problems for the practitioners while maintaining institutional standards and professional commitments.

## Cascading effect of iTESL (TEC)

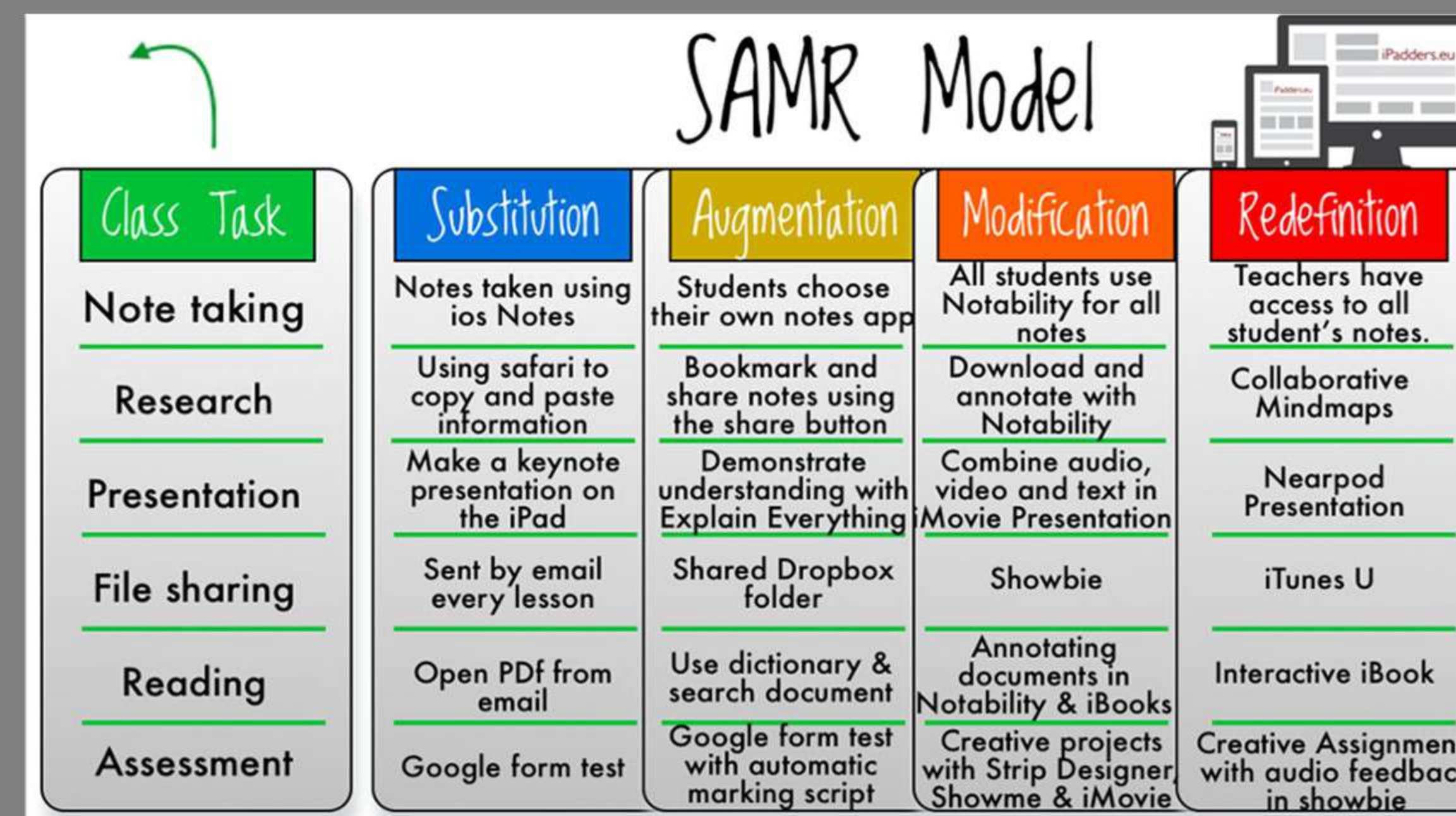
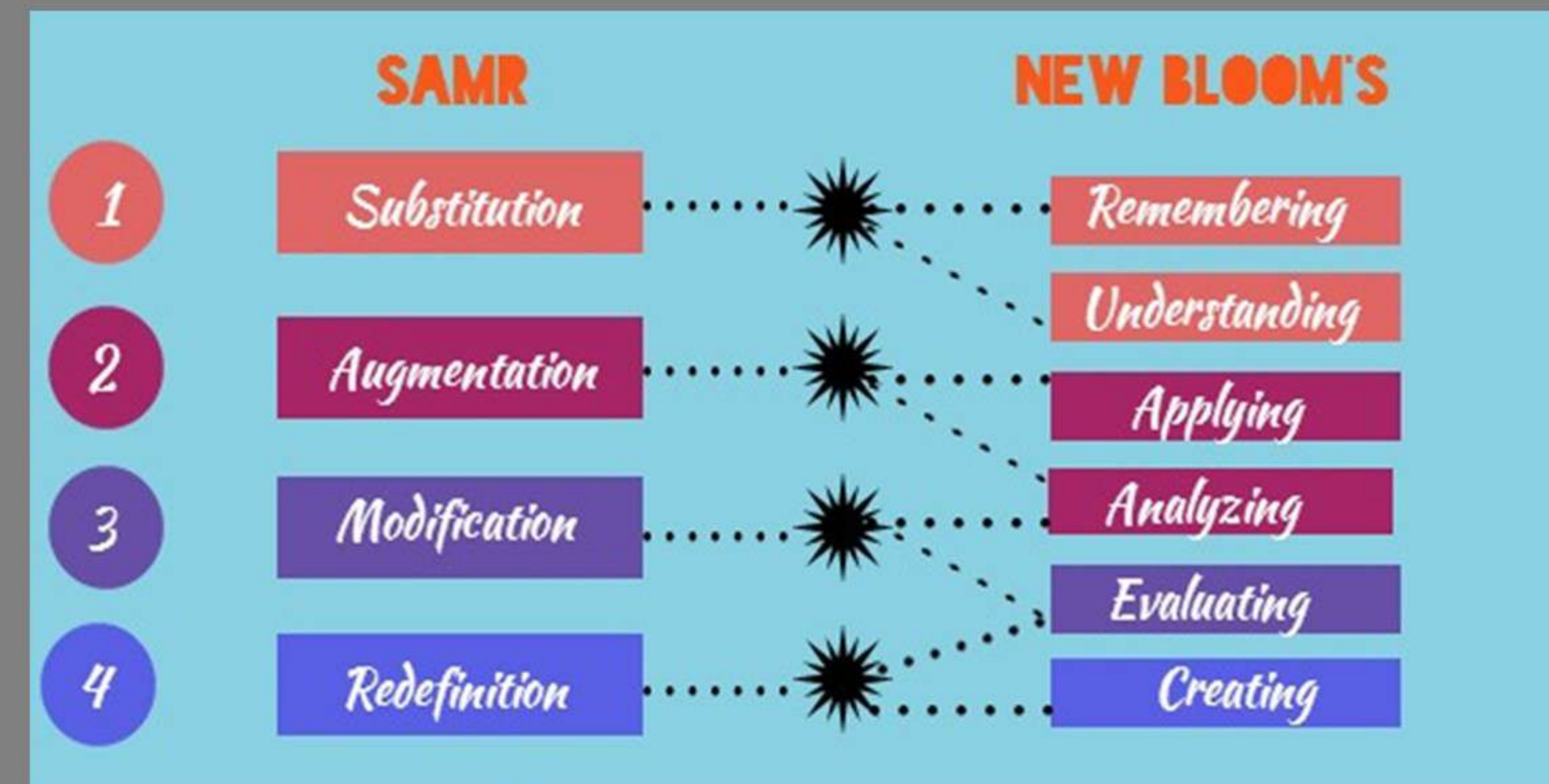
A change in protocol of practice (Wickramasinghe, Weller, Smith 2019) occurred among the practitioners in the National Colleges of Education when the British Council –iTESL (Teacher Trainers') programme introduced them the possibilities of using mobile phones in the classroom for language activities, sharing readings on subjects of interests and research findings using the social media groups. The practitioners exploited this knowledge to share learning materials, send messages and discuss matters related to management of learning with their prospective teachers in the classrooms. This was mainly done through social media platforms like WhatsApp and Viber. There were attempts to introduce trainees a combination of online and in-person learning activities which were incorporated through techniques of blended learning, flipped learning and videos in the teaching and learning process adding variety and novelty to their learning experiences. Learning support groups are created by these teacher trainees themselves and all the members of the classes and the Lecturers join in the communication. This seems the most preferred by both categories of users alike where only required materials will be printed and others are for additional reading.

## Developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.
- Collaboration and Communication.
- Digital Literacy.
- Creativity and Imagination

## ICT Integration through SMAR Model

- four different degrees of classroom technology integration



Puentedura (2014)



Figure 1: Social media in the Language classroom

## Using Deep approaches to Learning

In this context, the learners are dissuaded from resorting to surface approaches to learning which persuade the students to reproduce what is studied without properly understanding it. In order to motivate learners to understand the meaning of what they learn, the practitioners design tasks to direct the learners to use deep learning strategies which require higher order cognitive skills. Through the learning platforms created in Moodle software the teacher can trigger discussions on a subject area where the students require to read the texts, understand them and interpret accordingly. This process allow the learners to change their approaches to learning and develop autonomy and experience ownership of learning which provide them with the ability to make informed judgments about their learning. Simultaneously, trainees develop self-regulated learning skills which trigger the ability of the learners to set goals for upgrading their knowledge as well as selecting learning goals.

## Food for Thought

Effective use of the online discussions would provide opportunities for the learners to identify critical aspects and problems and issues in relation to different learning and assessment tasks. For the learners, availability of constant access to peers and knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1980) exerts a strong and direct influence on the development of confidence in handling new learning.

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