

SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION: BEST WAYS TO BEGIN BY TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM.

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Abstract

The social media phenomenon has come to stay in our social life. It has proved to be the most potent scientific discovery of the 21st century to connect people on a wide range of issues. Youths have been the most entrenched in the use of the various social media networks and it is gradually creeping into the education field. The social media came in many forms and many dedicated to offering particular social networking services. Recently, it has gained inroad into the education sector and stakeholders are worried of its obsessions influence on student learning. The paper looked at the various forms of social media networks in use now and identifies those with educational values which are of value to students and teachers in the teaching learning process. The paper gave useful tips for a successful application of social media in the classroom.

Key words: *Social Media, Linkedin, Edmodo, Secondlife, Google Hangouts, Facebook. Twitter.*

Introduction

Social media is often seen merely as a way to pass the time or stay connected to friends and family. However, its use is rapidly expanding into the educational field. Pearson Learning Solution (2013) reported more social media use in education than it does in 2012. The survey found those faculties are becoming more interested in the ability to leverage social tools to facilitate engagement with course material and to encourage the learning process. The survey reported that roughly 59% of educators agree that the interactive nature of e-learning and other mobile technologies create a better learning environment for students, while 78% believe that the use of e-learning and mobile technologies has increased the teacher and students communication.

As more and more educators eschew outdated education practices, students

will benefit greatly from this new open-information environment. Social media platforms like Face book and Twitter allow constant communication and direct access to information and opinions from their teachers and peers. This online classroom extends into the space of the students lives, social media seamlessly integrates into the students' daily learning experience. I think it is important to encourage all lecturers to establish Face book pages for their courses where they can easily post relevant articles, reading assignments as well as discussion questions.

Laurenti (2011) submitted that social media use has increased significantly since they (students) caught on few years ago. Recent study showed 1 in 4 people on earth have a face book account. As social media use has proliferated, businesses have increasingly sought to leverage the advertising opportunities it offers. It is also possible for teachers, school administrators and students to use the power of social media to enhance learning online in all educational programs. The following guides according to Laurenti (2011) provide five of the top uses for social media in educational environments.

Enhanced Collaboration

Social media allow students to work together on projects beyond an individual capability. Students' problem-solving skills are often better enhanced in a collaborative environment which social media amply offered.

Enhanced Flipping

Social media can be used to enhance the teacher-students relationship. As classrooms have begun to evolve over the decade, educators are taking a hard look at traditional approaches to education. Regular classes usually consist of a lecture, with home work completed outside the classroom. Some educators are exploring a new way to teach, called "flipping" the classroom. In this strategy, students view recorded lectures or read curricular material outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, students complete what usually qualifies as homework. Teachers act as tutors, helping students through problem areas in their work. Social media software can be used to deliver this educational content outside the school and facilitate collaboration between students and teachers as well as among students themselves during in-class work.

Real Time Information

Simple communication of up-to-date information to a student body is another way some schools are already using social media. Social media subscription can be

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helpful for providing homework assignments or assigning reading materials as well as enabling students to communicate with teachers outside the classroom. This use can also be a better way for schools to reach parents than mass e-mailings or sending home printed letters.

Collaboration between Educators

Building course curricula is a challenging task. For higher grade levels, several days can easily go into creating a one-hour lecture. Social media can be powerful tools for educators to communicate ideas and share lecture plans.

Open Source Social Media

A public social media website like face book or twitter may not be appropriate for a classroom setting, but there are many open source social media services that allow collaboration between individuals. For example, "Diaspora" offers an open source alternative to traditional social media. It allows customization, enabling educators to host the platform on their own school servers. Many students and teachers prefer to separate their school and personal lives. By offering an alternative to personal social media websites, educators can work in a controlled environment, building learning solutions that work best for different age groups.

General Outreach

One of the benefits of evolving social media is the ability to reach a vast amount of people. Educational institutions can reach not only potential students, but current students, alumni, industry peers and the general community. Students want to get a feel of what the institution is really like from their face book page. That is why every educational institution wants to be seen on the internet. So currently, educators are using social media to maximize student enrolment, alumni engagement and increasing media outreach.

Social Media Sites With Educational Offerings/applications

Linkedin

Linkedin is a business oriented social networking service. Founded in 2002 but launched on May 5th 2003. Linkedin reports more than 259 million acquired users in more than 200 countries. The site is available in over 20 languages. The basic functionality of linkedin allows users to create profiles and connections to each other in an online social network which may represent real world professional relationship.

Table 1; Countries with the most Linkedin users as at January 2014

Country	Number of users	Percentage of penetration
USA	93million	29.90
India	24million	2.02
Brazil	16million	2.09
UK	14million	22.41
Canada	9million	25.82
France	7million	9.91
Spain	6million	11.54
Italy	6million	9.88
Mexico	6million	4.72
Australia	6million	23.88

Source: Linkedin Homepage, 28th July 2014

Linkedin provides good platforms for educational applications such as Amazon Reading List that allows Linkedin members to display books they are reading; a connection to wordpress and typepad applications allows members to display their latest blog postings within their Likedin profile. In 2010, Linkedin allows businesses to list products and services on company profile pages. It also permitted Linkedin members to recommend products and services and write reviews. Linkedin also supports the formation of interest groups. The majority of the largest groups are employment related, although a very wide range of topics are covered mainly around professional and career issues and there are currently 128,000 groups for both academic and corporate alumni.

Edmodo

Edmodo is a social learning platform website for teachers, students and parents. It is marketed as the Face book for schools. The users of Edmodo can post assignments, create polls for student responses, embed video clips, create learning groups, post quizzes for students to take and creating a calendar for events and assignments. Students can also turn in assignments or upload assignments for their teachers to view and grade. Teachers can annotate the assignments directly in Edmodo to provide instant feedback.

Parents can also view Edmodo under their child's username or they can create their own account. A parent account allows parents to see their children's assignments and grades. Teachers, can send alerts to parents about school events, missed

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assignments and other important messages. Similarly teachers can generate printable class rosters, so if a teacher is going to have a substitute teacher in their classroom that needs a printed roster, they can print one from an Edmodo account. Educational social networking sites like Edmodo, offer an opportunity to connect with students and help them create norms and reflect on how different online actions will be interpreted.

Google Hangouts

Google Hangouts is an instant messaging and video chat platform developed by Google and launched on May 15th 2013. Hangouts include the ability to make voice calls at competitive rates. Hangouts allow users to hold conversations between two or more users. The service can be accessed online through the Gmail or Google+ websites or through mobile applications available for Android. One major educational benefit of Google Hangouts is the video conferencing platform which allows for group video conferencing up to 10 users at once; chat histories are saved online, allowing them to be synced between devices. A 'watermark' of a user's avatar is used as a marker to indicate how far they have read into the conversations which are automatically uploaded into a private Google+ album.

You Tube

Teaching using videos of the teacher in their computers, ipads or smart phone devices has a stimulating effect on the students. Students would probably prefer their teachers more in a video than in person because they have better control on their lecture (and the teacher) when it's a video. They can't rewind a teacher 10 times in the classroom: they can't pause the lecture in a real class and ask to repeat because he/she didn't understand. While watching a teacher give lecture in a video on the other hand, students wouldn't need to pretend that they have understood. They can go back and watch the lectures again in the comfort of their homes.

If you as an institution are confident about the teaching skills of your teachers, you should record the lectures of your teachers and share it with the world with the help of YouTube. You can even sign up for "You Tube for schools" to bring the power of video to your classrooms.

Face Book

Face book is based on real names and authentic identities. That is probably the reason why it is the most popular and safest social media network for young students. There are three major types of accounts on Face book; pages, groups and profiles.

Profiles are designed for individuals, pages and groups is recommended for institutions. You can create online place for students to ask questions and hold discussions with their fellow students and teachers.

Twitter

Twitter helps teachers and students to create their own learning networks. It gives them the opportunity to find and connect with the lives of people around the world who can help them take their learning and teaching experience to the next level. Twitter helps you to search through educational Hashtags such as Tweetdeck or Hootsuit.

Instagram

When kids are engaged they learn better. That is the reason educators are embracing instagram to share information and connect with their students, parents and other educators. Teachers can use instagram to announce home work assignments, share classroom experiences with the help of pictures.

In the Top 100 Tools for Learning Site(2013) report, Edmodo was in the 29th place behind other collaborative sites as Twitter, You Tube, Wordpress, Face book, Moddle and Skype. Other top social media sites for education includes Wikispace Classrooms,EDU 2.0; Blackboard and Twinducate. Daniels, (2014) identified major benefits of using social media with students as learning to communicate openly, honestly and kindly with their peers.

However, the use of social media platforms in the classrooms, requires caution, adequate training must be given to would be teachers and students on how to infuse e-learning platforms into the traditional learning system. If proper care and training is not given, the gains and benefits expected of social media in education would be lost even before takeoff.

The first step towards applying social media into education starts with empowering teachers by giving them freedom to use social media to engage with students and giving them the freedom to come-up with innovative ways of teaching using technology. This will probably become easy when our education laws and codes are amended and further liberalized to accommodate innovative engagements in our education.

Using Social Media In The Classroom

Fee, (2013) suggested best ways teachers can infuse social media into their daily lessons. These suggestions are as enumerated below.

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Encourage students to share work socially;

You as a teacher who is interested in encouraging the use of social media in your class must take the lead. Give them work to do as assignments either as groups or individual and encourage them to share their work among themselves online. At Penn State University, Anna Divinsky created an "I Tune U Class" called Art 10; which was later adapted to a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). The mooc, called Introduction to Art: Concepts and Techniques. It latter amazed more than 58,000 students. For each class assignment, students were responsible for evaluating each other's work. Because it the class was online, social media played an essential role in connecting students and creating an online community.

Use a Hashtag to facilitate Guest speaker discussions;

Encouraging students to engage with guest speaker via Twitter makes them more engaged with the platform and prepares them to raise important questions online. You can encourage students to tweet questions to guest speaker during discussion as the speaker is talking. This is what prevails at New York University's Marketing class, this innovation ensure that students don't interrupt the speaker while he/she is talking. More importantly, however, is that it also engages the students' social communities outside of the classroom.

Require students to keep a Blog

A blog is an online diary on website that is frequently updated with personal journal intended for public viewing. Keeping a blog is a phenomenal way to work on your vice as a writer, and to truly explore and hone in your personal interests. By requiring students to keep a blog in place, you make your job as a teacher easier and you help them establish their digital presence as an emerging thought leader.

Require Original Expert Sources

For journalists, Linkedin has proven to be an invaluable tool to reach out to sources from CEO's to corporate PR representatives. Teacher can foster this skill by encouraging students to reach out to sources directly through Linkedin.

Use Google Hangouts

If you are teaching an online class or you're teaching remote'y, Google Hangouts can be a great way to check in with students face-to-face. This is also good for adjunct professors who wish to conduct office hours but may not be on campus often enough to meet with all their students.

Create a Social Classroom on Edmodo

Edmodo help you to create a social digital classroom. On Edmodo, you can post assignments, create a class assignment calendar, and upload photos and messages to students. With more than 17 million users, Edmodo has been a highly successful endeavour. It allows students to get real-time feedback by taking quizzes online. Teachers can also engage socially with one another by sharing lesson plans online.

Challenges Of Using Social Media In The Classroom

With all the benefits social media provides, there are issues and challenges that must be considered before it can be successfully infused into the traditional lesson plan. Foremost is the issue of teachers' readiness to embrace technology and innovations in the classroom, most consider such moves as erosion of their authority as teachers. Kwok(2012), identified this as problem of change and adaptation to new technology by teachers, he observed that most teachers can not acquiring new knowledge if they begin using social media in teaching.

With the adoption of social media into classroom teaching most educators fear the lost of their traditional roles as the sole source of classroom knowledge and authority. Teachers will no longer be the only "voice of authority" in the class because there are students who adopt new technology and learn new information faster than teachers. Social media in education will carve out new roles for teachers in the class, the role as Kwok(2012) observed will be that of thought leaders of the classes they teach. A thought leader is there to lead the learning process, provide new thoughts and facilitate discussion.

The issue of privacy is a concern when considering using social media in the classrooms. Students may not realize the danger of disclosing too much information such as their class schedules and their locations. Participant at the the Pearson Learning Solutions (2013) indicated that their number one concern of using social media in the classroom is the integrity of student submissions, followed closely by concerns about privacy. Students might impulsively reveal their private lives for the world to see. Teens should be told about what is appropriate in communication on social media. Parents and teachers should teach them about private settings.

Conclusion

The social media phenomenon have not only come to stay as part of our social life, it has also come to stay as an important ingredient of any successful educational programme. Technologically savvy parents and students are making the application

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and integration of social media into school curriculum as pre-requisite for enrollment. Notable social media platforms like Face book and Twitter have become part and parcel of many educational institutions.

Recommendations

To address the concerns about privacy in the use of social media in the classroom, the paper is recommending Larson (2013) guidelines for the use of technology in the classroom.

1. do not post inappropriate activities
2. do not disrespect your students with personal activities and concerns
3. keep confidential information confidential.e.g. Confidential matter like a student's grades, full name or contact information should stay within school records.
4. utilize privacy setting for your postings and that of your students for information you do not wish to share.
5. communicate to students on their level, and
6. avoid chat Roulette at all costs.

In addition to the above, the paper is recommending the adoption of a working policy on the use of social media in schools, the policy will guide and regulate the use of various social media platforms in the classroom so that abuse and inappropriate use can be minimized.

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