



A STUDY ON RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

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ABSTRACT

“Social media: an innovative education tool” were undertaken to study the relevance and importance of social media which is an in-thing among the educational sector. In an era, where the global is the word to define common platform for the people around the world to share and exchange their beliefs, culture, traditions, knowledge, views, etc. Today peoples, especially students uses social media a lot not only to stay connected with far away friends but also uses this as a tool for making fun and sharing their thoughts within the self created closed groups regarding education, society, sometimes politics also. This drastic change in the attitude of students provides a big platform for the educational institutes to provide the education using such substitute medium. This study explores the possibilities and effectiveness of providing education using social media as a platform. The study concludes that our education system needs change and social media should be widely utilized for the educational purposes. It is mainly used for the purpose of making presentations followed by assignment updates, better research, and connectivity.

INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming ‘glocal’ from global and is squeezing its economic, social, and political boundaries thus giving it a common platform for development. The convergence of the media has expanded the usage of internet that gave birth to social media. Social media, a concept that has given people a common platform for sharing their news, views, and opinions regarding the happenings around them. Not only this, social media is also being used by the advertisers and companies for their promotions, professionals for searching and recruiting, students for internships, amateurs for professional work, parents and educators as social learning tools, etc. Internet is a very essential part of life from shopping to electronic mails and education, internet is very important. It is a very large community which is using internet for pure education but unfortunately we have also a very large number of people including majority of youth and teenager using Internet only for social networks. Internet is very big evolution of technology but when we talk about the social networks it is extremely dangerous for youth and become enormously common and widespread in past few years.

Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark and network at a prodigious rate. Examples include Face book, MySpace, Twitter, and JISC, authorstream, slideshare, lists serves on the academic side. Because of its ease of use, speed, and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry. Since social media can also be construed as a form of collective wisdom, we decided to investigate its power at predicting real-world outcomes. Students use such social media to collect the knowledge



about their related studies and areas. The best example of the above stated statement is found at the sites like slideshare, authorstream etc. These reforms in the attitude of students provide a large platform for the educational institutes to transform education and provide quality education over social media apart from the traditional methods.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study about the different types of social media and social networking sites available for the students.
2. To evaluate the relevance of the social media as an educational tool
3. To know the perception of students towards use of social media as an educational platform.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To collect the first hand information with respect to perception of students towards using the social media as an educational tool, a field survey is conducted in the Bilaspur city and a sample of 100 students is selected using quota sampling. The quota is based on the different streams of education. All streams were summing up within four categories i.e Engineering, Arts, Science and Management. A sample of 25 students was selected from each category using convenience sampling technique. The data collected is entered in SPSS 20 for thorough analysis. Secondary data was collected from newspaper, magazine, online journals, and research done in the field.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, career interests, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Furthermore, social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of technoself studies. Social media differ from traditional or industrial media in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy and permanence. Social media operates in a dialogic transmission system, (many sources to many receivers). This is in contrast to traditional media that operates under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers).

"Social media has been broadly defined to refer to 'the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships'". There are many effects that stem from internet usage. According to Nielsen, internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC and mobile devices increased by 99 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 compared to 66 billion minutes in July 2011. For content contributors, the benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond simply social sharing to building reputation and bringing in career opportunities and monetary income, as discussed in Tang, Gu, and Whinston (2012).



TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Facebook** is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. According to statistics from the Nielsen Group, Internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website.
- **Twitter** is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Not everyone loves Twitter in the classroom, and there may be good reasons for that. However, it makes the Top 10 because students love it and they use it. Setting up a Group Tweet account lets you moderate who joins and what gets posted. It is also important to keep the account strictly business.
- **Google+** (pronounced *Google plus*) is Google's social networking project, designed to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services. The project's slogan is "Real-life sharing rethought for the web."
- **Wikipedia** is a free, open content online encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community of users known as Wikipedians. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication; registration is not required to edit articles. Wikipedia was founded in January of 2001.
- **LinkedIn** is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.
- **Reddit** is a social news website and forum where stories are socially curated and promoted by site members. The site is composed of hundreds of sub-communities, known as "subreddits." Each subreddit has a specific topic such as technology, politics or music. Reddit site members, also known as, "redditors," submit content which is then voted upon by other members. The goal is to send well-regarded stories to the top of the site's main thread page.
- **Pinterest** is a social curation website for sharing and categorizing images found online. Pinterest requires brief descriptions but the main focus of the site is visual. Clicking on an image will take you to the original source, so, for example, if you click on a picture of a pair of shoes, you might be taken to a site where you can purchase them. An image of blueberry pancakes might take you to the recipe; a picture of a whimsical birdhouse might take you to the instructions.
- **Twiducate**: Described as a "walled garden," this site is billed as a safe site for teachers and students to collaborate. It's easily accessible and allows teachers to create a class community online using a class code rather than an email address. It also allows teachers to have total control over who is a member and what gets posted. And, it's free.
- **TweenTribune**: Want to join up with a site that hooks kids on current events? TweenTribune lets students stay up-to-date with current events from the Easthampton student whose tongue froze to a metal pole to a proposal by New Jersey's governor Chris Christie to lengthen the school day and the school year. It gets students in the news habit and offers a chance for them to comment on the days events. Unfortunately, it does have advertisements (though, what news outlet doesn't). It sticks to the upbeat news of the day—don't log on expecting the latest on the Syria conflict.



- **Blackboard:** This is the industry leader in course management systems, but it isn't something you can adopt on your own. The decision to use Blackboard is usually made at the district level, though occasionally by individual schools. Blackboard is an incredibly powerful, safe and comprehensive platform. Many newer teachers will already be familiar with it from their teacher training programs. The downside is cost. This is a very expensive platform, but you pay for quality. That said, it will lack some flexibility for its most tech-savvy teachers.
- **EDU2.0:** This is for teachers looking to integrate course management systems like Blackboard, without the cost. Edu2.0 starts out by offering all its premium features on a free trial basis. At the end of the trial period, those features turn off and you can still use the basic platform for free. These features will be plenty for the average user, but may be enough for "power users." Edu2.0 is cloud-based and requires no significant investment in storage capacity.
- **Wiki spaces Classroom:** Collaboration is second nature to Wiki users and Wiki Classroom proves it's no exception. Wiki Classrooms are private social networks complete with news feeds and communication tools. It's safe because you decide who's invited — students, parents, administrators. You can assign, collaborate on, discuss and assess projects all within the site. It can even handle multimedia. The best part, Wiki spaces Classroom is free.
- **Edmond:** Here's another excellent, free classroom management system. It includes news feeds, assessment tools, communication capabilities and security features.
- **Skype:** Too many educators overlook the potential of Skype in the classrooms. It is the one site that can literally bring the outside world right into your classroom. You can host authors, visit science labs or talk to pen pals from across the globe.
- **MinecraftEdu:** The secret of MinecraftEdu is its ability to harness the power of video games to engage learners. This game allows students to collaborative, explore and problem solve all while learning about history, economics, science and math. Teachers can customize it to fit their *curriculum*.
- **Sum dog:** This gaming site is kind of like flashcards on steroids. Elementary school age kids love this site. The social aspect is the ability to add friends to their accounts. Kids will race home from school to play them online. It has fun levels and clever characters.
 - Facebook added over 200 million users in less than a year
 - iPod application downloads hit 1 billion in 9 months
 - percent of companies use social media for requirement
 - YouTube is the second largest search engine of the world
 - Twitter recorded 200+Million tweets per day in 2011

After seeing these facts, you can truly understand how social media is taking off in the 21st century. Today, social media is not used to stay connected with friends and family but also for other purpose like professional learning, networking and researching. The involvement of social media in education has given a new dimension to this industry. With the presence of social media in education industry, teaching has changed drastically. The importance of social media has increased not just for students but also for the teachers. Although, at times most of the parents do not take



use of social media in education positively, they think it can do more harm than benefit. But this combination (teen students+ social media) is a great one if teachers understand and help students to make effective use of this social media to build their knowledge base.

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION

(a) Information Literacy

Information literacy means having the ability to recognize the quality of information. This is very much necessary in this digital era where information is easily accessible within a few second. Although, there is no particular way to learn how to analysis the quality of information, but it can be possible only with teacher's guidance. Use of social media under the strict guidance of teacher can help student to evaluate the quality of information. After collecting the information, students should be able to synthesize and present. This process of creating, analyzing and evaluating information with proper exposure in social media helps student to develop critical thinking. In this entire process, the role of teacher or the importance of teacher is critical because they are the one who guide their students in this process.

(b) Better and Increased Communication

Various social media websites like Facebook offers great platform for study purpose. Educators can use Facebook to set up the pages related to their lesson plans. Using online platform, students can easily collaborate with each other, even shy students can participate more actively. Through various other platforms like Google Hangout or Skype, teachers can easily initiate discussions or debate. All these social media platforms assist teachers to increase communication with their students. They can effectively communicate and encourage even shy students to participate actively.

(c) Effective Lesson Plans

Lesson Planning becomes easy and effective with social media tools like Instagram and Pinterest. It enables teachers to easily upload photos and graphics related to their lesson plan. Teachers can also use Twitter and Facebook to guide their students in research projects with links. Today, Twitter is one of the best platform that helps teachers and students to create professional learning networks. Teachers can also record the session and upload it to YouTube, so that they (student) can view or access it when they are struggling with their homework in their home. This is one of the effective ways of teaching where students can learn at their own pace.

Social media in education, being a relatively new concept has been the central concern of many educators, teachers and parents. In the short time that it has existed, people all over the world have welcomed it as an indispensable addition. In this article, we explore the role of social media in education, its benefits and challenges. While the adoption of social platforms has not been uniform globally, a study conducted by University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has revealed that **100%** of studied colleges have opened up their arms for social platforms in one form or the other.

INCORPORATION IN THE EXISTING EDUCATION SYSTEM

For a generation who spends their maximum time in the virtual space, focus must lie on the key interests and needs of students while using social media in education. Also social media provide ways to enhance connection with



students as it brings them closer by alleviating the necessity of physical presence. Here are some interesting ways in which schools use or can use social media in the **21st century teaching and learning**.

- (i) ***Classroom Resource***
 - a) Sharing of important announcements and discussions to keep members updated through Twitter. **(Using Twitter for Teacher Collaboration)**
 - b) Blogs and networking sites as a hub for links to important resources/articles/information. **(Power of Twitter for Student Research)**
- (ii) ***Institute Pride***
 - a) Mascot Facebook pages to popularize events, encourage participants, develop a school spirit
 - b) Freebies like school swags and useful material shared online
- (iii) ***Reaching Out***
 - a) Through virtual platforms, many institutes allow not just a peek but a full navigation of the campus.
 - b) Through name tags of institutes provided by students in their interactions via social media, institutes approach potential students via their online profiles.
- (iv) ***Professional Development***
 - a) Websites provide information about one's own industries directly from the source.
 - b) Networking provides interaction avenues with colleagues. (Also see **Google Hangout for Teacher Development**)
- (v) ***Stay Connected***
 - a) Active, at times cost free promotion can be done on virtual groups, pages and blogs, also allowing feedback and further interaction at the same time.
 - b) Institutes can even interact with parents and keep each other informed.
 - c) Alumni groups can maintain connection.

EDUCATORS USING SOCIAL MEDIA - NEW SURVEY FINDINGS

A new study released last week by the Babson Survey Research Group, with support from New Marketing Labs and Pearson Publishing suggests 80 percent of professors, with little variance by age, have at least one account with either Face book, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr, Slideshare, or Google Wave. Nearly 60 percent kept accounts with more than one and a quarter used at least four. This is news as it has been felt many professors are leery of social media sites, especially when it comes to educating their students. However, this study states a majority, 52 percent, said they used at least one of them as a teaching tool.

The survey netted responses from 939 professors from colleges in Pearson's network of two- and four-year colleges. Most said they teach in undergraduate programs, and more than a third reported teaching online or blended courses. Demographically, the respondents did not skew strongly to a particular sex, discipline, professional rank, or age, says Jeff Seaman, co-director of the Babson group, a research organization that also does work with the Sloan Consortium. An Inside Higher Ed article touches on a few points from the survey.



Faculty use of social media both in and out of the classroom has been the subject of some controversy. A professor at East Stroudsburg University was placed on administrative leave two months ago after some of her frustrated musings ("Does anyone know where to find a very discreet hit man? Yes, it's been that kind of day") were interpreted by some students as threats. Besides isolated cases of extreme indiscretion, there has long been debate over whether professors should accept "friend" requests: Some professors are glad to friend their students, while others prefer to maintain a professional distance. Professors have likewise been split over the use of certain social media as teaching tools. For example, some have called in-class Twitter forums gimmicky and distracting, while others evangelize it as a vehicle for unprecedented engagement with course content.

Of course, not all Web 2.0 tools are created equal. Among respondents to the Babson survey, YouTube was the preferred tool for teaching, with more than a fifth of professors using material from the video-sharing community in class. (Less than five percent said they use Twitter to transmit information to students.) Face book and LinkedIn, meanwhile, were the most popular tools for communicating with colleagues. About ten percent of all respondents instructed students to create content within a social media community - such as contributing to a blog or posting a video - as part of an assignment.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

It was found out that majority of students (at about 93%) were using some type of social media on regular basis. Facebook, whatsapp, hike, we-chat, you tube, were found the most famous form of social media among students. Slideshare, and Authorstream is most commonly used sites for searching of educational material among students. When asked about the opinion of students towards using these social media for educational purpose majority of students replied that it was a great idea and helps them in their studies in many ways, even after class hours. Majority of students says that it will provide them better and even one to one guidance related to their subjects. Students also says that they can even able to learn when they are comfortable to learn and this will lead to educational reform. Majority of students says that using social media for education will break the boundations of class room studies and they will enjoy this freedom of learning. Respondent says that education on social media helps them to learn new subjects which are not in their curriculum and they will also get proper guidance from the related faculties. On the whole it was concluded that students possess positive perception towards the idea of using social media for educational purpose.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the relevance and use of social media as a platform to provide education apart the traditional classroom teaching. Benefits and importance of using social media as an educational tool is discussed along with the various types of social media. A survey is conducted to know the opinion and perception of students towards the idea of using social media as a platform for providing education and found that students like this idea. Survey also concluded on focusing the various benefits which would gain by the students if institutes use such opportunities and platform for providing education. Perception towards such idea among students is also found positive and relevant.



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