

TEACHING & LEARNING USING SOCIAL MEDIA

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Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Social media also refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social Media is the

current trend of communication, presenting a countless array of internet based tools and platforms that increase and enhance the sharing of information. This idea and form of media makes the transfer of text, photos, audio, video, and information in general increasingly fluid among internet users. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. This is all well and good.. but how does this play role in the educational landscape?

Social media and Internet-based tools that promote collaboration and information sharing can be used in academic settings to promote student engagement and facilitate student learning. The Internet can provide a rich environment for hosting the educational and learning activities for students. Because student engagement represents the time and effort that students invest in collaborative and educational activities, it is often linked with the achievement of positive student learning outcomes, such as critical thinking and individual student development.

As such, learners need to develop skills to share knowledge and to learn with others, both in face-to-face situations and through technology including social media.

Educators can use social media to develop creativity in their students by encouraging them to explore the content material in new ways.

Educators must not only promote creativity and assess student activities but also inform and clarify misunderstandings that occur involving the content area and subsequent knowledge creation in order to maintain the integrity of the learning environment.

The many ways that can be facilitated in the educational setting are to;

- **motivate individual innovations and contributions**
- **coordinate group members' collaborative efforts**
- **promote group members' positive interdependence**
- **monitor group members' individual contributions**
- **promote and support peer evaluation**
- **facilitate the assessment of students' contributions and learning outcomes**
- **support group collaboration**
- **support and assess collaborative learning**

Social media aside, the whole endeavor falls under the caveat of technology enhanced learning which aims to improve the quality of formal and informal learning, and to make accessible forms of knowledge that were simply inaccessible before via the transformative use of technology. Too, in the context of the social media, it can be geared and designed to conform to the many assistive roles of technology to foster learning in the forms of;

- **learning tasks that are authentic, challenging, and multidisciplinary**
- **assessments that are performance-based, generative, seamless and ongoing, and equitable**
- **instructional models that are interactive and generative**
- **learning contexts that are collaborative, knowledge building, and empathetic**
- **grouping strategies that are flexible, equitable, and heterogeneous**
- **teacher roles as facilitators, guides, co-learners, and co-investigator**
- **student roles as explorers, cognitive apprentices, teachers, and producers**

Even though teaching & learning using social media is a design construct rather than one proper to students or learners, in any determination of a course and learning as a social process means we have to take into account the role of communication and conversation in the learning process, the design of the learning environment, and the ways in which teachers' and students' interactions can facilitate learning; the benefits accruing to students should be of principle concern. So, in the use of the social media, has the teaching and learning been enhanced, facilitated, made captivating, motivating, stimulating, interactive, collaborative, engaging, and prepared in multiple perspectives, to name a few.

Consideration of the learning environment prompts the following learner focused questions; how authentic, purposeful, and active are the activities? What role do collaboration and community play in accomplishing tasks? What are the mechanisms for feedback and critique?

As the social media are mere vehicles, it is the pedagogy that provides the driving mechanisms in the teaching and learning endeavors. Subsequently, the nature of teacher and student interactions can be assessed by asking;

- **Who is valued as an expert and source of knowledge?**
- **How does the teacher's role change as students develop expertise?**
- **How does the teacher facilitate this growing expertise?**

In its finality, the lens of learning in a social context helps us to think about how, through engagement in purposeful tasks, with expert assistance, and by collaboration with others, the learner is encouraged to operate "as though he were a head taller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102).

Consequently, it is imperative for learning designers to resolve questions regarding what students expect from the technologies of social media, as an extension of their interest in other technologies.

This will lead to the changing roles of the teacher to accompany these wonderful teaching and learning facilitation; otherwise, nothing will change either insofar as addressing the 21 century learners and their learning experiences.

The teacher must now;

- **shift from being a from lecturer to consultant, mentor and resource provider -leading towards learning facilitation rather than knowledge transmission;**
- **become an expert questioner rather than provider of answers (but you better know the answers too) -a question bank and a variety of activities and quizzes and responses will have to be prepared;**
- **becomes the designer of learning experiences of students rather than just content providers**
- **provide the initial structure (only) to the students work, thus encouraging self-direction and subsequent learning strategies developed by the students themselves;**
- **provide multiple perspectives on topics, emphasizing the salient points and the principles for better understanding rather than to regurgitate the readily available content;**
- **shift from a solitary unit to form learning team in this endeavour, leading to the demise of total autonomy of the lecturer towards activities that can be broadly assessed;**
- **shift from total control of the environment by the lecturer to sharing with the students as fellow learners and knowledge builders;**

- provide more emphasize to the learning preferences of the students (within limits of course).

Since social media is the order of the day, a technological focus on what students really want should be addressed in the context of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, the role of the teacher should now design the digital learning environment with the capability of multimedia computing and the connectedness of the learners in the current educational landscape.

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