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The Guideline for Using Social Media in Learning

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Introduction

The introduction of web 2.0 and the immense use of social software has opened new and creative opportunities in teaching and learning (LeNoue, Hall, & Eighmy, 2011). For many years' now many theorists and researchers have been providing evidences about how technologies can enhance our learning experiences. Specially in lifelong learning, technology plays a vital role, as it aids formal, non-formal and in-formal learning environment. Now, as I already pointed out that theorists and researchers influenced us to use technology in teaching and learning process to enhance learning experience, the educators are trying to use different learning technologies in their students' learning process. However, one of the difficulties of using different learning technologies, that are there are no systematic guideline of using them. In this piece of writing I will be discussing about some guidelines of using social media in learning.

Why do we use technology?

Because of the easy availability and accessibility of different technologies, we are using them without even realizing their full potential. However, before going further about social media or learning technologies it is important to discuss what is learning technology. According to Rushby and Surry (2016) explained that learning technology is not all about technology, but technology that supports better learning. Similarly social technology is technology that supports socializing. Now, social technologies can also be used as learning technology. Social technology in a broader sense means the technology that is used by a group of people to overcome any social challenge. Now-a-days social media is the most commonly used social technology world-wide. Although initially the emergence of social media was solely for the purpose of social communication, however because of the excessive use of social media and the constant new additions in its feature has helped it to evolve from social technology to learning technology. According to Conole (2008) the fundamental of web 2.0 is, no individual is an expert, it is the group who through a network can come together and become a group of experts. He also acknowledged that web 2.0 has enabled us to co-construct knowledge, which is why knowledge is not static.

What is social media?

Social media is a web based and mobile based technology that was initially appeared for the sole purpose of social interaction. According to Nations (2018), social refers to interaction of social beings and media is the instrument of interaction. Usually it has been seen that people use the term social networking and social media alternatively. However, now there is a very subtle difference between these two (Nations, 2018) and social networking is now only a part of social media.

How can we use social media?

Using social media in teaching-learning process, increases teacher-student interaction that improves students performance and critical engagement with the subject (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). In this new age of learning when learners' needs are becoming so diverse, it is very difficult to accommodate those need in traditional way of teaching learning methods (LeNoue, Hall, & Eighmy, 2011). According to LeNoue et al (2011) the way of addressing learners diverse need is to use social media in learning. The social media has also been referred as an important tool for the new media of learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2015). Because of science and technology many new and contemporary theories based on learning ecology have been came into light. Although these theories are directly connected to e-learning, however, these learning theories can help us to have better learning experience in face to face and blended learning as well.
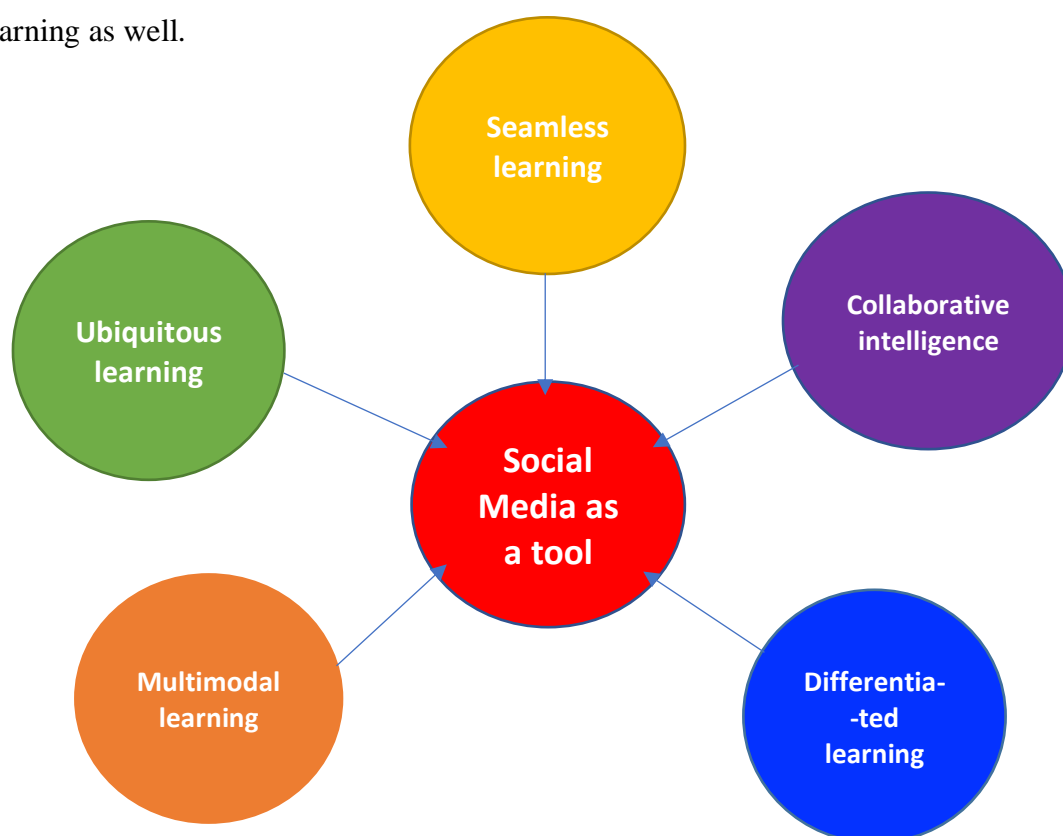
According to these theories social media can also help us addressing different needs of student and enhance inclusivity in learning environment (Kalantzis & Cope, 2015). For example adults who are managing their family and/or work, learners with disability, learners of various types etc. Additionally, because of powerful communication applications, social media can help the users in making both synchronous and asynchronous communications (Wang, Scown, Urquhart, & Hardman, 2014). This feature supports different pedagogical aspects in teaching-learning which is why social media plays an important role in education.

Mostly used media and their features

Some highly used social media that are used as a learning tool and their main features that supports learning are discussed below:

Facebook: Facebook is one of the most used social application around the globe. Anyone over the age of 13 can open an account on Facebook with the help of phone number or an email address. Along with the social interaction feature known as 'Facebook Messenger' it has many interesting features which supports sharing videos, images, update posts, share posts, comments and likes on a post. One can also open a group page as well as pages regarding different topics based on interest. With the help of privacy settings, the owner of the contents can edit the privacy of each content. It can also send notification like digital calendar to remind events near a person. One can also search a topic with the help of hash-tagging and searching with keywords as well as share links of other websites as well as documents. This also suggest similar pages based on related topic that one already showed interest in.

Twitter: Twitter is another social networking website that is highly used all over the world. Just like Facebook one has to open an account with an email or phone number. Twitter also have the same features as Facebook. Moreover, it has a suggestion section where it shows different new pages that is similar to the pages one is already following. Also, it has a feature of pinning the tweet, that helps as a notice board.

Instagram: Instagram is a photo based social networking mobile based platform. One has to have an account on this platform just like any other social networking websites. The main features of this platform are to share videos and photos. However, this platform helps to understand trend and find out information based on images and videos.

Blogging websites: Technically blogging websites are not for direct real time interaction, however because of the comment option under each blog posts makes it interactive to some extent. There are many blogging websites for example: Weebly, Blogger, Word press, Wix and many more were individuals can create websites or blog for free. Along with blog post that have text body in it, the bloggers can also upload images and videos, documents, links of different websites to enhance the quality of the blog post.

Skype: Skype is a real time communication software application. It has the features of video conferencing and group messaging feature with multiple people. One can also share documents, videos and images through this platform.

Apart from the discussed social media platforms there are some other social media like 'LinkedIn', 'Google +' and 'Pinterest' are very popular as a learning tool (Otto, Williams, & Lundqvist, 2015). Also there are some web software that are not social media but are supported by different social medias like mind mapping tools, infographic tools, video making software which helps learners and can be used in social media.

Guideline for using social media in learning

According to Wang et al (2014) because of structural, cognitive and relational affordance, social media is a useful tool in adult and life-long learning. But before using any of the social media affordance it is essential to determine the purpose of that affordance in a teaching and learning process (Wang, Scown, Urquhart, & Hardman, 2014). According to the purpose some guideline for using social media have been suggested below:

Purpose	Affordance of Learning
Instruction	The instruction-text, course contents, slides, resources and other materials (image, videos etc.) can be published on group page or blog posts. Any open source and tools for creating text, audio and video; webinars can be shared through social media.
Creating materials	Creating pages, groups, new educational content and other materials as it is easy to share through social media

Research	Researching a topic through hash-tagging and others posts, uploaded contents; creating polls for opinion or providing new discussion topics.
Critical thinking and creativity	Encouraging students to explore new tools and use them in presenting their understanding of the topics. This also help students to think critically.
Interaction and collaboration	With the help of message and video calling options groups works and peer works can be done easily. Even people who are living on the other side of the world can create knowledge by collaborating.
Multimodal learning	Because of the affordance to share text, audio, visual and video contents it is easy to create an inclusive learning environment. Learners of all style can be accommodated through these platforms.
Reminder	Some social media sites have the feature of reminding or sending notification of events. In case of assignment deadlines, it can automatically send notification to the participants.
Participation and critical Engagement	By discussing different topics online, sharing knowledge and experience through social media instructors can monitor and ensure participation. Also, by checking the shared information and giving feedback instructors can ensure critical engagement.
Sharing and presentation	As a result of supporting all types content these social medias can be a great platform to present their understanding and learnings.
Assessment, Evaluation and Feedback	It is easy to assess and provide instant feedback on students work through social media. If the students send their project, instructors can evaluate and share the comments right away by pin pointing the positives and negatives along with the work
Evidence of learning	Sharing work in a web-based platform means the evidence of the work will not be lost. Instructors as well the students can check back these evidences any time in future.

Conclusion

Using social media can make instructor's work not only easy and smooth but also more effective. Moreover, because of the easy availability and accessibility of social media it is very convenient for the learners to use them in their day-to-day learning. According to Manca &

Ranieri (2013), social media is an adequate tool for cross-culture collaboration and community building. Additionally, by emphasising on building community Yakin & Tinmaz (2015) also agreed that social media can be a tool for community practise to share ideas, find solutions and building innovations. Having said all the usefulness of social media in learning, the instructors and students have to be aware and careful about the privacy and data protection measure for their own benefit. Also using data from social media one has to be aware of 'Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights' and use those data ethically for creating new knowledge. Social media supports in knowledge acquisition as well as in knowledge construction. Especially, if it is utilized properly in blended and distance learning it can play an important role in formal and informal learning settings.

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Appendix

Some idea of using technology in learning