

Using Social Media to Maximize Students' Learning Outcomes

Shahzada Masoud-ul-Hassan¹ Tehseen Azhar^{2*} Taimoor Hassan³ Dr Syed Hisham Hassan⁴

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Law and Education in Mirpur University of Science & Technology, Mirpur Azad Kashmir.
2. Lecturer, DHA Suffa University, Phase VII Ext. DHA Karachi.
3. Visiting Lecturer, Department of Business and Management Studies in Mirpur University of Science & Technology, Mirpur Azad Kashmir.
4. Mohi ud Din Islamic Medical College Mirpur AK.

* E-mail of the corresponding author: tehseen_azhar@hotmail.com

Abstract

With the emergence of various types of educational technologies the teachers' role has become more of the facilitator instead of machine of delivering lectures. Today students have access to various sophisticated digital technologies and its use gets appreciation since businesses and other organizations expect graduates to be expert in new technologies. Since the use of social media has changed many things the manner people communicate and interact, this article highlights the scope and efforts to use social media to enhance learning experiences of undergraduates at Mirpur University of Science & Technology (MUST). Students' responses to the new technologies have been incorporated to guide future course of actions. Since use of social media into a teaching assignment requires considerable time and effort by the teacher, nonetheless, experience of faculty in their efforts to use social media in the teaching of traditional courses has also been focused upon.

1. Introduction

Communication landscape has been profoundly changed due to social media tools. It is also leaving a significant impact on teacher and taught activity in the classroom. The impact is growing day by day and teachers as well as students are being affected by the impact because use of social media tools generates discussion and strengthen class activity and promote active learning and collaboration. Various educational technologies are used to enhance the learning experiences of the students and researchers and educators are undertaking various experiments to know the effect of social media on critical thinking skills and construction of knowledge (Aditi 2010). Social media works on both sides; it receives as well as generates academic material that enhances learning outcomes. The real objective today emerges for researchers is that how students can improve their learning experiences and become part of that noncontiguous body on social media? It is also very important that how teachers and students take the challenge of using social media tools for effective teaching (Walkyria 2010). Following are the few technologies that are changing the paradigm of teaching activity and learning experiences.

- **Weblogs.** These can be created and used easily on the internet and students as well as teachers can communicate through it.
- **Wikis.** It is web space where adding and editing of the content published is very easy for users.
- **Really simple syndication (RSS).** It is a tool that facilitates users to subscribe to information or news-feeds.
- **Social bookmarking.** Bookmarking sites allow users to save and archive entire web pages. This enables users to produce a searchable, personalized Internet.
- **Online photograph galleries (OPG).** OPGs allow the posting of photographs that support sharing of ideas and experiences.
- **Audio/video casting (AVC).** AVC makes it easy to produce digital voice and video files and publish and distribute them over the Internet. It also supports basic, live-streaming television online.
- **Twitter.** Twitter is a powerful tool for connecting with others and sharing content easily.
- **Social networking sites (SNS).** In addition to supporting wide area communication in both audio and video formats, SNSs help teach the network literacy that is required to navigate these new connections (Will 2010).

2. Methodology

With the emergence of various diversified social media tools which can easily be used an alternative to the ordinary approach of using old method of delivering lectures followed by question /answer sessions. Incorporating social media can facilitate a diversified group of students to connect between one another on line and share their knowledge, experience, opinions and queries. The approach enables students to have increased access to teacher and with peers to remain engaged on some course outline, data or much needed information. Resultantly the students were encouraged to use latest social media technologies; nonetheless, the response was discouraging. Various students were not willing to even upload their classroom assignments for review by the

teacher. Slowly gradually the response was profound when students were told to incorporate blogs on team projects. A group of information technology enthusiasts among students got the leap and used online photograph galleries (OPG) to share information and ideas. Students were also made to use Twitter for communication purpose.

3. Students' Experience

In a Law class only 3 out of 35 students had experience of using social networking sites previously and only one used Twitter so far. The number of students using social media was profoundly discouraging and negligible in Education class; however, 5 out of 45 students in business class used Twitter before joining undergraduate course. Since a systematic motivational activity to use social media for learning was undertaken by the researcher the response at the end of the course was encouraging. Each syndicate working on presenting a seminar as a part of enhancing their communication skills used online photograph galleries and other tools. Before the end term examination, a survey was again conducted and following feedback was received from the students.

- Almost all the students started using Facebook and Twitter however they showed some apprehensions using it safely for educational purpose. (*A guideline for students to use social media was formulated to address these questions*)
- Considerable number of students showed their reservations regarding the utility and usefulness of social media usage, nonetheless, some students quickly showed their willingness to use social media in the course.
- Despite of initial apprehensions and reluctance, majority of the students later established their likes for its use for teaching purpose.
- First and foremost thing those students learned was developing effective communication with the use of blogs and remain fully engaged in their study projects.
- Students were of the view that their ability to communicate has been profoundly increased and it has been very useful sharing their presentations via Internet.
- Students were overwhelmed with the feeling that their experience of using social media tools has enhanced their knowledge and overall understanding of various topics.
- Students were of the opinion that using and later getting mastery on a variety of social media tools has helped them to prepare for a viable career in business management.
- Students profoundly enjoyed the use of social media in teaching of courses and showed their wholehearted willingness to use these tools in other courses in coming semesters.

The encouraged response regarding use of social media from the selective lot of students from law, education and business management disciplines will go a long way to work more on this issue and ensure effective learning experience in other disciplines of the campus as well.

4. Faculty Experience

The use of social media replacing the traditional approaches for a selective set of courses remarkably transformed the classroom performance of both the teacher and students. The teacher's role slowly gradually changes and he or she becomes more of an architect and counselor. This role modification also brought variations in the instruction monitored in the course. Change at student's level was also likewise very important, since earlier students used to be just passive learners but now became active ones. Following are the lessons learnt out of these primary efforts in this regard:

- Teachers should plan to incorporate social media tools into their teaching assignments. It might at the outset proves a time consuming activity but its use also provides opportunities to reach alternate ways to teach a course with many options of introducing additional related topics.
- Since the roles of teachers as well as students in the course of teaching activity while using social media changes significantly both need to come up to the change without apprehensions. The use of social media in the class generates fruitful discussions that results in better learning atmosphere.
- Both students and instructors should accept the reality of new social media tools that outspread and improve students' communication.
- Teachers have to realize that all of the students may not respond enthusiastically towards all social media approaches abruptly, nonetheless, the step by step approach to motivate them towards all social media tools will work and they will feel comfortable using just one or two tools in the beginning and later expand their skills to others.

5. Guideline for Students to Use Social Media

- Students may not show their personal identity on social media.

- Students should remember they are using social media for educational purpose.
- Students should avoid and neglect unbecoming comments.
- Class size in this regard should be kept small in size.
- Small sized projects should be encouraged in this regard.
- Timely feedback is very important especially at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of project is desirable.
- Teachers may spare more time on courses with social media mechanisms.

These findings showed that students in the beginning showed reluctance to use any social media tools but once they were encouraged and made to comprehend the all mechanism involved in this way coupled with the academic advantages they responded positively.

6. Conclusions

- The decision to use social media resulted in increased learning outcomes of undergraduate business, law and education students.
- It was learnt that use of social media tools not only facilitates teaching learning process but also redefines the role of teacher as well as of student in its significance and importance.
- It was also learnt that using social media tools is a time consuming activity but it also opens many ways for students and teachers to peep into many related fields and useful sub topics.
- Since media is a reality of today's world and is massively being used for communication purposes in all walks of life let us agree to the fact that use of social media tools are equally beneficial for academic goals as well.

References

- Aditi Grover and David W. Steward, *Defining Interactive Social Media in an Educational Context*, Cutting-Edge Social Media Approaches to Business Education, Information Age Publishing, 2010.
- Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein, "Users of the World Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media," *Business Horizons*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 2010, pp. 59-68.
- Charles Wankel, "Management Education Using Social Media," *Organization Management Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Winter 2009, pp. 251-262, <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/omj/journal/v6/n4/pdf/omj200934a.pdf>.
- Doug Rushkoff, "Renaissance Prospectives," *Pop!Tech* 2004, Camden, ME, Oct. 2004, <http://www.itconversations.com/shows/detail243.html>
- Rachel Reuben, "The Use of Social Media in Higher Education for Marketing and Communications: A Guide for Professionals in Higher Education," <http://doteduguru.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/social-media-in-highereducation.pdf>.
- Walkyria Goode and Guido Caicedo, *Social Media Overload: What Works Best?* Cutting-Edge Social Media Approaches to Business Education, Information Age Publishing, 2010.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

