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Use of Social Media in Education

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Abstract:

Social media has become second nature to today's learners, so why not use it in the classroom. Today's younger generation is hooked on social media. If given the choice between Tweeting or textbooks, which would students choose? Many teachers think that if they allow their students to use social media in the classroom, students will be posting status updates about how their day is going, which would only detract from educational experiences. However, social media can be a powerful educational tool that provides unique and dynamic learning experiences to students and teachers alike. Social media are becoming the most important tools for interaction among people, where everybody can share, exchange, comment, discuss and create information and knowledge in a collaborative way.

Introduction:

Social media are internet sites where people interact with one another. They provide a place for people across the world to share information and engage in discussions. Social media provides the means to share graphics, videos, and audio files. With a history dating back nearly 20 years, social media has become second nature to today's students. We are seeing education institutions adapting these developments into their systems and relying on group resources and mechanisms to improve the student life. The use of social media in education provides students with the ability to get more useful information, to connect with learning groups and other educational systems that make education convenient.

Social network tools afford students and institutions with multiple opportunities to improve learning methods. Through these networks, you can incorporate social media plugins that enable sharing and interaction. Students can benefit from online tutorials and resources that are shared through social networks and LMS's.

There is valuable knowledge to be gained through social media such as analytics and insights on various topics or issues for study purposes. Social media is also a medium where students can establish beneficial connections for their

careers. As an educational institution, it is crucial to be active in many social platforms possible; this helps create better student training strategies and shapes student culture.

Social media can prove to be a detriment to classroom learning when students are using it inappropriately to communicate during a lesson. However, it no longer has to be this way.

There are numerous teachers that resent the fact their students are obsessed with social media. When students constantly text and post comments and pins during class time, studies have proven this has a negative impact on classroom learning. At the same token, teachers constantly feel like they are fighting a never ending losing battle to maintain student attentiveness in class.

By changing the approach to learning using social media, you can stop fighting an uphill battle and get students excited about learning using interactive classroom activities. As a teacher, social media also allows you to continue to do what you love.... which is to teach.

Reasons to use Social Media:

Social media technology in the classroom sites like Facebook and Twitter have been a prevalent part of our society for some time now, and it's no secret that they are here to stay. While some teachers may frown upon using social media technology in the classroom, others say that it can actually be useful for educational purposes. Here are a few reasons why teachers like to use social media technology in the classroom:

1. Helps to increase Student's Knowledge:

Social media has the ability to increase knowledge in a matter of minutes. By simply scrolling through your newsfeed, you can get updates on the latest current events and news. You can also easily search for relevant information by using hashtag **#news**. The ability to get timely updates is what makes social media so great. Many teachers have found that using social media sites in the classroom is an effective and quick way for their students to increase their knowledge about current events. As long as you set some boundaries, and show your students what it can and cannot be used for in the classroom, it can be an effective way to increase knowledge.

2. Improves Communication between Parents, Teachers and Students:

Social media has the ability to keep parents, teachers, and students on the same page about what's going on in the classroom. Teachers can easily post homework assignments, upcoming project dates, and school event information to their social media page. Long gone are the days where you have to sit and wait by the phone to get a reply. Teachers love social media because you can easily communicate with parents and students in an instant. Sites like Facebook and Twitter make it easy to instantly provide feedback, ask a question, comment, or private message someone.

3. Allows Students to get help from others:

Social media sites can be useful for students to get help from their peers or other relevant experts. If a student has a question about their homework assignment, all they have to do is post their question and ask for help. Students can also ask an expert by tweeting or posting to a Facebook page. Social media also gives students the ability to private message the teacher or post a specific question to the teacher on their wall. When students do that, other classmates can see the question posted on the wall, and chime in which is a great way to get the discussion started and get feedback from one another.

4. Can Encourage Student Participation:

One of the great things about using social media in education is that it encourages students to participate, especially for those shy students who don't like to verbally talk in class. Social media can help make these types of students more confident in speaking their opinions so that when they are in the classroom they will feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Social media also makes it quite easy for students to collaborate with one another. Students can work on school projects or group assignments from home and easily contact one another via social media to work on their task.

5. Has a Variety of Engaging Features:

Every social media site has different features that can help their users to do different things. For example, Twitter and Instagram are known for using hashtags. When students are using these sites and want to search for something specific, all they have to do is use a hashtag. For instance, if students were working on a project about any Historical Place like Red Fort, Humayun Ka Makbara etc, they can use the hashtag #Red Fort, # Humayun Ka Makbara etc. to find out specific information about them. Facebook has what they call "Groups" or "Pages" where you can join or like to find out more information for your project. These unique features are what makes social media so much fun and engaging for students.

Use of Social Media in Education:

It is still a taboo that Social Media has no place in the field of Education but still there are certain things one can do to use it in the field of education like:

1. **Connecting with Experts on topics via Social Media-** The great thing about using social media is that you soon learn who the experts are in particular fields and subjects. When you start following these experts you learn more and gain useful content from them, this empowers you to produce great results. Social media has the ability to broaden your perspective on various subjects and gives illuminating, instant content that is new. You have the opportunity of engaging experts to get answers on topics that you may need help in.

2. Institutions Communicate with students via You Tube, Whastapp and Facebook:

Learning colleges have the ability to connect with students through social media networks such as Facebook, Google Plus groups, Whatsapp and YouTube. These channels/ mediums can be used to communicate campus news, make announcements and provide students with useful information. This builds engagement between the College and students which help tackle many student issues through the group interactions.

Institutions can share supportive and positive posts that reach all students that are connected to the networks and pages. You can initiate hashtags on social media to engage students and online discussions that are helpful. Video is a prominent tool in social media trends that are effective and you can use it to share useful videos that inspire students and help them not only in their course subjects but also in building a good human being also.. Through social mediums such as YouTube, Facebook or Instagram live video the engagements between students and the institution can be sustained. It is advisable to be selective about which social platforms to use for the best practice.

3. It helps in Research:

Social media offers audience and subject monitoring tools that are useful and it is one of the best platforms to extract data. You can find out how the majority people feel about a particular topic or how experts perceive and advice on specific issues.

This can help students compile and produce useful content for research. Whether students are working on an assignment, working on a project or trying to gain more insight on a subject, some of the best information and results can be extracted from social media.


Ways of Using Social Media in the Classroom:

There are numerous ways by which the Social Media can be used in a positive aspect in the classroom. Some of the ways are as follows:

1. **Set an Example:** Students learn plenty of new things every single day. However, they rarely get precise instructions on how to use social media platforms. Thus, they rely on their intuition and the examples they see from other users, which don't always lead them in the right direction. It's time to set an example. Explain how social media can help them learn and establish a great online reputation. Be a great example for them and introduce them to the concept of responsible digital citizenship. So a teacher can play the role of setting up the example by incorporating her knowledge and channelising the energy in a positive/ right direction.
2. **Connect the entire classroom in a Facebook/ Whastapp group:** Create a private group and invite all students to join. Be careful before you take this step; you have to make sure that every single student in your class has access to a smartphone, tablet, or computer. There are underprivileged families that may not buy phones for their children. You should also talk to the parents since some of them might not approve their children to have

Facebook/ Whastapp profiles. If you have the green light, you can form the group and start posting discussion topics. If in any case the Student cannot afford phone, then you should try to pass on the information/ content through any other mode.

3. **Ask your students to blog:** Blogging is a really fun activity for students of all ages. Explain what a blog is and ask them to pick a niche they are passionate about. It doesn't have to be related to the curriculum. Then, tell them how to conduct research and develop plagiarism-free blog posts. You can discuss those blogs once a month in the classroom and all students can post comments on each other's posts.
4. **Invite guest speakers:** You can easily use social media platforms to present speeches by guest speakers in the classroom. Skype video conferences are cool, but you can also connect through YouTube and Facebook. Thanks to technology, your students will have access to new resources for learning and inspiration. MysterySkype is the great option and it is easy to find other classes to connect with all over the globe using your PLN (Professional Learning Network).
5. **Tweet!:** Twitter is an extremely fun network for students. If all students in your class have phones with Internet access, you can organize an active Twitter discussion during class. Think of a hashtag related to the discussion and ask them to conduct an online research and post a tweet with an interesting fact in 15 minutes.
6. **Host a podcast or video channel:** Use YouTube to publish your own educational videos or podcasts. If you don't have enough time to maintain the channel, you can search YouTube for relevant content and play it during class. Then, you can all talk about it.
7. **Start pinning:** Pinterest is a great website that students and teachers can use for collecting educational resources. You can ask them to create separate boards for related topics, and ask them to follow each other's collections. Then, you can choose the best resources and present them in class. For example, you can ask your students to pick the most inspiring traveling destinations, find different facts, and create Pinterest boards that they will present as projects for geography class.
8. **Connect with other classrooms:** This is how you'll enforce the bond between the students in your class: you connect with other classrooms and you inspire a healthy competitive spirit. Have you seen the Physics of the Future project? It's a great example of online collaboration. The students research different topics and share their findings with the community via Google Hangouts, podcasts, and other methods communication. Then, they engage in a collaborative learning process. The Global Classroom Project is another example you can learn from.
9. **Create a Facebook profile of a class:** You can create an official profile of the class and post updates that all students and parents can see. You can promote the achievements of your students, and post frequent updates on daily experiences.

10. **Start a Flickr photography project:** Flickr is a great place where your students can find images for their projects but have you considered making contributions to it? Organize a field trip and ask them to take photos with their phones. Assign random hashtags (#happiness, #architecture, #sunset, #nature, or anything else you can think of), which will motivate them to take certain types of photos. Then, you can choose the best ones and post them from your Flickr profile. This project will make your students aware that they can make meaningful contributions to the world of Internet.
11. **Document Art Projects and Science Experiments using Instagram:** The social media platform, Instagram, is a great way to document classroom activities that involve a step-by-step procedure. Students can use mobile devices to capture an image of each step of a science experiment or art project. You can then setup a classroom page on Instagram for students to upload their photo documentation. The Instagram page can be accessed from anywhere and used as a reference for homework assignments, reports, and more.
12. **Using Instagram to display Student's Work on Classroom Activities:** Students tend to put forth more effort when they are receiving compliments and feedback. Set up a classroom page on Instagram to showcase their work and allow parents to see their child's progress. You can also share other classroom activities on the page to keep parents up to speed on their child's classroom achievements.
13. **Engage Students in Learning Geography using Twitter and Google Earth:** Students can use Twitter and Google Earth to enhance their study of geography by using a combination of these platforms. Teachers have used their network of followers on Twitter to create interesting and engaging geography lessons using networking in real-time.


One teacher listed under the above link, requested his Twitter network to challenge his students to locate each follower using Google Earth. This was achieved by using small snippets of information provided by each network member. This helped students to learn geography while having fun trying to determine the location of each follower.
14. **Organising Virtual Field Trip:** If you are studying a specific topic that makes it difficult for students to learn more on a traditional field trip, you can set up classroom field trips using the videoconferencing service, Skype. Students can take an all-day field trip without leaving the classroom. If the location you want to take your students to have the Skype videoconferencing system; you simply connect to the location using an Internet connection and the Skype app. This is a great way for students to engage in learning on various topics including Earth Science, Art, Social Studies, Language Arts, and much more. The field trips can also be tailored to meet specific learning objectives in the core curriculum.

Conclusion:

Thus social media are already affecting the ways in which teachers find, create, share and learn knowledge, through the media opportunities and in collaboration with each other. It is a very useful tool for enhancing teaching and learning. So while using the Social Media a great care needs to be taken care off. On the other hand Social Media can bring about great advancement in the classroom environment and students can become well versed with the technology. So the use of Social Media in the Classroom is to be done in a meaningful manner.

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