Learners In New Educational Arena : Social Media

Rakhi Bhattacharya , Assistant Professor. Dept. of Education. Government General Degree College, Kalna-I Medgachi, Muragacha. Dist.- Purba Bardhaman . Pin – 713405

ABSTRACT:

Social media represents a powerful shift in the educational arena, providing learners with flexible, engaging, and interactive opportunities for growth. While its adoption brings challenges, its potential to foster global connectivity, critical thinking, and self-directed learning makes it a cornerstone of modern education. As educators and researchers explore its applications, understanding the impacts and best practices for social media in education will remain central to its effective integration into learning environments.

Researcher has delimited the study only to learners' perspective of online learning and that too only to explore new platforms. Content review and pilot study was done to explore the new educational arena.

It is found that students' idea of educating themselves has expanded beyond classroom and many new platforms are being used to cultivate their holistic development. As long as we want to emphasis NEP based outcome based education it is our duty to follow these trends and make way for new teaching design which will incorporate blended mode in such a way so that students' novel explorations can find some voice and make them self-resilient.

Key Words : #BlendedMode, #NewAgeEducationPlatform, #PlatformofEducation, #SocialMedia

I. INTRODUCTION :

The rapid proliferation of social media has significantly transformed education, positioning itself as a critical tool for fostering communication, collaboration, and engagement among learners. Traditional educational paradigms, which were largely confined to physical classrooms, are now increasingly supplemented or replaced by digital platforms that enable access to information and interaction in unprecedented ways. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp have moved beyond their original social networking roles to serve as effective educational tools, creating what researchers call a "new educational arena".

Social media provides learners with opportunities for ubiquitous learning, where knowledge acquisition is no longer bound by time, space, or institutional walls. It allows students to engage in continuous learning through interactive discussions, multimedia resources, and knowledge-sharing across borders. Webb (2017) emphasizes that online spaces, such as forums, blogs, and social media platforms, provide a textual residue of human interaction that allows educators and researchers to examine communication, collaboration, and self-expression within digital learning environments. Social media fosters a participatory culture in which learners become both consumers and creators of knowledge, actively shaping their own educational experiences.

Furthermore, social media supports the development of cognitive presence, a key component of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, which focuses on knowledge construction through meaningful dialogue and interaction. Researchers such as Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) highlight that learning on social media requires the careful balance of cognitive and social presence, as students must transition from casual interactions to structured learning experiences that enhance critical thinking and problem-solving. For instance, discussions in Facebook groups or Twitter threads often begin informally but can evolve into substantive exchanges of ideas that promote higher-order learning outcomes.

The identity development of learners also becomes significant within social media environments. Platforms encourage students to explore, construct, and validate their identities through self-presentation and interaction with diverse communities. Research by Sanderson (2008) and Suter et al. (2014) underscores that social media enables learners to manage impressions, negotiate roles, and articulate their

personal and academic identities in safe, supportive spaces. This aspect is particularly vital for younger learners who are navigating personal growth alongside academic pursuits.

Despite the advantages, the use of social media in education is not without challenges. Ethical considerations, such as privacy, data security, and misinformation, must be addressed to protect learners from potential risks. Hewson (2014) highlights the importance of informed consent and ethical protocols when social media is used as a research or learning tool, as online spaces often blur the boundaries between public and private domains. Additionally, educators face challenges in designing meaningful learning experiences on social media that align with pedagogical objectives while maintaining engagement.

In the era of blended learning, where online and face-to-face instruction are integrated, social media plays an increasingly prominent role in bridging the gap between formal education and informal learning opportunities. By enabling seamless communication, resource sharing, and collaboration, social media enhances the inclusivity and accessibility of education, particularly in remote or underserved communities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW: Learners in the New Educational Arena—Social Media

1. Social Media as a Tool for Learning and Collaboration

Social media platforms have dramatically reshaped the educational environment, offering learners unprecedented tools for interaction, collaboration, and information sharing. Researchers have noted that these platforms facilitate diverse learning opportunities by fostering communication beyond physical classrooms. The interactive nature of social media supports the concept of ubiquitous learning, allowing students to access educational content anytime and anywhere.

Webb (2017) highlights the role of social media as a medium for examining human communication and online behaviour. Studies conducted on blogs, micro-blogs, discussion forums, and social media platforms provide insights into how learners engage in self-disclosure, identity formation, and negotiation of social roles. Similarly, tools like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are utilized to explore group cohesion and knowledge sharing, which are critical for collaborative learning.

2. Cognitive Presence and Social Media in Education

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) model has been frequently applied to online learning environments, including social media platforms. According to the CoI framework, successful learning occurs at the intersection of cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence. Cognitive presence is particularly significant in promoting higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, as learners engage in collaborative discussions and shared inquiry processes on social media.

Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) emphasize that social media discussions often exhibit a tension between social presence (building relationships) and cognitive presence (knowledge construction). However, carefully designed online tasks and facilitation can guide students toward meaningful learning outcomes.

3. Self-Presentation and Identity Development

Social media encourages learners to experiment with their self-presentation and identity, particularly in virtual learning environments. Suter et al. (2014) explored the negotiation of family roles on online forums, illustrating how learners use social media to articulate and validate their identities. Similarly, research on adolescent learners reveals how platforms like Instagram and TikTok are spaces for identity exploration, community building, and creativity.

Moreover, online learning researchers emphasize that self-presentation strategies play a crucial role in motivating learners to participate actively in discussions and complete assignment. Sanderson (2008) demonstrated that blogs and micro-blogs allow learners to manage impressions and convey authenticity, which enhances engagement and trust among peers.

4. Ethical and Privacy Considerations in Social Media Learning

Despite its benefits, the integration of social media into education raises significant ethical and privacy concerns. Hewson (2014) discusses the need for informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality when analyzing online data. Social media platforms often blur the lines between public and private spaces, making it essential for educators and researchers to adopt rigorous ethical protocols.

Issues such as cyber bullying, misinformation, and data security also pose challenges for learners. The shift to online learning environments during the COVID-19 pandemic further amplified these concerns, as researchers observed both opportunities and risks associated with increased reliance on social media.

5. Blended Learning and the Role of Social Media

Blended learning, which integrates online and face-to-face instruction, has become a dominant approach in contemporary education. Research suggests that social media can enhance blended learning environments by supporting communication, content sharing, and community building. For example, Facebook groups and WhatsApp chats are often used to complement in-person classes, enabling learners to discuss concepts, clarify doubts, and share resources.

Karen Vignare's research on blended learning emphasizes the importance of characterizing effective practices and measuring outcomes to understand the impact of social media on learning. Case studies reveal that successful blended learning implementations rely on well-structured social media activities that align with pedagogical goals.

III. DESIGN : Tool used are i) Content review and ii) Open ended questionnaire , Interview

     This study was primarily a content review and the findings are used for a small group pilot study on students of Class 9 to 12 (WBBSE& WBCHSE)

     Issues explored in the content review and pilot study are

- – Use of new platform in smart phone

- – Use of social media app in smart phone

- – Educational use of smart phone

- – Recently used new app

- – Profile of data used

IV. FINDINGS : The use of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram as learning tools has transformed the educational landscape by offering innovative avenues for teaching and interaction. These platforms promote learning by facilitating easy access to educational resources, enabling real-time communication, and fostering collaboration among students. Teachers can utilize these tools for instructional purposes by delivering content, assigning tasks, and providing feedback efficiently. Social media enhances students' interaction, encouraging peer-to-peer discussions, group projects, and resource sharing in a more engaging and informal environment. Additionally, these platforms nurture a sense of social presence, helping students and educators build relationships, inflate their academic contacts, and develop networks that support both personal and professional growth. Social media ensures that learners remain informed by providing regular updates, notifications, and opportunities to participate in educational discussions, ultimately creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment

V. FURTHER STUDY: Further research could delve deeper into understanding teachers' perceptions of social media, exploring both positive and negative attitudes toward its integration in educational settings. A specific focus on Facebook as a learning tool could investigate its effectiveness in promoting learning outcomes, as well as teachers' preparedness and training for leveraging social media in the classroom. Additionally, studies on social media's role in asynchronous digital learning can analyze its capacity to support self-paced learning, particularly in remote or hybrid education models. Comparative research on the relevance of educational apps versus social media platforms as educational tools would provide insights into their respective strengths, limitations, and impacts on learning engagement and achievement. Finally, further investigation into the red flags raised by students, such as privacy concerns, distractions, or misuse, could guide educators and policymakers in implementing strategies to mitigate these issues, ensuring that social media serves as an effective and responsible educational platform

VI. Conclusion

The integration of social media into education has redefined how learners interact, collaborate, and construct knowledge. While platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube offer numerous opportunities for cognitive and social engagement, challenges such as ethical considerations and data security must be addressed. Future research should focus on identifying best practices for integrating social media into

formal and informal learning environments, ensuring that learners benefit from its full potential while mitigating associated risks.

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