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Role of Social Media in Education

*Vikash kumar Meena

Research Scholar, Department of Education,
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur

Abstract

Human always tries to live in social networks to fulfill his biological and sociological needs. The driving force that sustains livelihood in these social networks is communication. Human strives to develop such media which can ease fasten one's communication with his near and far ones. Social media is result of such striving. It is one of the fastest communication channel used by individuals for exchanging information from one part to other part of the world within a fraction of second. This social media has touched each sphere of life social, political, economical and educational. This research article brings into light the role of social media in education.

Keywords: social media, education.

Social Media

With the advent of technology, offline medium of communication and interaction has got replaced by online communication medium named as social media. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines social media as “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).” Social media encapsulates digital tools and activities that enable communication and sharing across the net.

This media has made it possible for one to create and easily transmit content in the form of pictures, videos, audios and word. The kind of services available with social media include blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social networking sites, virtual world content (online gaming sites) and media sharing sites i.e. Youtube, Instagram etc. Mayfield (2008) identified five specific characteristics that underline the operations of all social media: participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. So, we can say that this media has opened the participation of communication in conversation on wider scale which sparks the feeling of connectedness among individuals.

Education

Education is derived from two Latin words i.e. educare and educatum. Educare means to train and mould. Educatum is the act of teaching. Education may be defined as a purposive, conscious or unconscious, psychological, sociological, scientific and philosophical process, which brings about the development of the individual to the fullest extent and also the maximum development of society in such a way that both enjoy maximum happiness and prosperity. It is a continuous and never ending process of acquisition of experiences which leads to development of personality of an individual.

Social media and Education: A Connection

Social media has influenced all spheres of life either social, political, economical and educational. In education scenario, this media enhances learning opportunities for students along with wider scope for 24x7 interactions of students with teachers. The importance and influence of social media in the field of education is evident from the fact that Indian govt. is taking initiatives to launch its own educational social network. The Rajasthan government Information technology department plans on launching its own education social network: like Facebook, for learning. This site will include all the standard features of social networking (photos, games) but will be focused primarily on educational collaboration and will include topic experts jumping in to answer questions raised by users. (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

The role of social media in the field of education is demonstrated by the following points given below:

- **Self-paced learning:** Sites that are designed for educational purposes are known as educational sites. These sites have a unique characteristic of self-paced learning, where the course content can be viewed by learner at any place and time and at her/his convenience.
- **Self-knowledge:** Students get engaged in various discussions in discussions forum on various topics. This provides an opportunity to students to interact and learn from each other without any geographical constrain, thus adding to their self-knowledge.
- **Skill-development:** Through blogging students can be engaged in practical work which can enhance their skills. In this era of computing, social media usage helps the individual in developing computing and communication skills.
- **Rapid spread of information and higher level of engagement:** Social media acts as a faster medium of disseminating information regarding exams and particular topic, seminar or conference from one point to other. Networking allows participants to just-in-time learning and higher levels of engagement.
- **Flexibility in learning:** Social networking adds an element of flexibility in learning. These educational sites allow learners to select learning material according to their interest and knowledge.
- **Enhancement in student interaction:** The integration of Social Media technology facilitates students' participation, interaction, and writing/literacy development. (Zheng, 2013). This media can enhance teacher-student interaction and serve as a 'communication' forum in educational settings (Williams, 2012).

- Collaborative learning: Social media provides support for collaborative learning. (Lockyer & Patterson, 2008). Students critique and comment on each other's assignments work in teams to create content and can easily access each other and the teacher with questions or to start a discussion (Kalia, 2013).
- Inclusive learning: Easy use and accessibility of social media creates an inclusive learning environment. Students with disabilities benefit from same learning experiences using social media as their non-disabled peers (Asuncion et al., 2012).
- Fast curriculum delivery system: Integrating social media in education system assist the process of curriculum delivery system and extend learning environment to real world and to enrich students learning experiences with real life experiences (Liu, 2013).
- Geographical distance is no more constrain for attaining educational experience: With the use of social media, individuals can participate in conference and seminar at any place in a world, by sitting at their own place and time.
- 24x7 scope for teacher student interaction: Social media provides platform for 24x7 teacher student interaction. 62% of students believe that social media is an extended opportunity to communicate between students and teachers (Stanciu et al.,2012).

Social media has added an element of inclusion, collaboration, self-paced learning, self-knowledge, 24x7 interaction, and flexibility to educational process. These elements in one way or other encourage the development of transferable, technical, and social skills of value in formal and informal education.

Suggestions for appropriate use of social media in education:

- Social media tools should be regulated by the school according to the age of the students.
- Teachers should inform students about the negative aspects of social media.
- Teachers should be fully aware of how sites work and what different settings and functions are available to use.
- Teachers must know how to reduce online risks and how to safeguard students from it.

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