

E-Learning via Social Media

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Abstract - Social media technology provides educators with an opportunity to engage learners in the online classroom, as well as to support development of learner skills and competencies. Social media is basically a structure that consists of individuals, communities, companies, organizations or classes in universities with similar interests, attitudes, values, lifestyles, visions, friendships, and learning objectives in the field of eLearning this structure can be used in various ways and through a number of tools. This paper tries to study some of the popular social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, and YouTube and see how they could be utilized in eLearning.

Keywords - E-Learning, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube

I. INTRODUCTION

Use of social media is on the rise within education, both outside and inside the classroom [1, 2]. As more educators incorporate social media in the classroom, they have needed to seek out new and old teaching and learning theories for incorporating the technology in pedagogically meaningful ways. When incorporating any kind of media, educators must consider the construct of the course, the technologies used and the pedagogical approach to designing and delivering learning activities. With the multitude of tools and approaches available, the challenge is in finding the approach that has the most meaningful learning outcome. One approach is to encourage students to use social media actively in their learning and research, opening up the potential for them to develop the skills they need for creating a

Personal Learning Environment (PLE) and bringing them a step closer toward becoming more self-directed learners.

According to a recent survey on the use of social media in higher education, over 80% of faculty are using social media, with 70% of faculty using social media at least once a month or more; of the faculty that use social media, 41% use media in their teaching [2]. Active use of social media in the classroom, which has been primarily passive, or consumptive in the past (e.g., in the form of watching an online video), is on the rise. According to [2], the number of faculty who are actively using social media (e.g., in the form of learners interacting and creating own content in a blog or wiki) has risen to nearly 30%, as compared to 10-12% of faculty in 2010 [1]. Weisberger suggests that active use of social media may be more pedagogically beneficial [3]. Weisberger's hypothesis is supported by other researches, which indicates that the active use of social media can increase learner engagement levels (student_student, student_instructor and student_content) and promote the development of cognitive and meta-cognitive learning skills, such as reflection, critical thinking, construction of knowledge and understanding of one's individual learning process [4, 5]. McLoughlin and Lee report on the pedagogical benefits of social media and identify specific affordances of social media connections and social rapport, collaboration (information finding and sharing), learner-generated content and accumulation of knowledge and information that contribute to the cognitive development of learners [6]. McLoughlin and Lee also propose that the inherent design of social media supports the development of learner self-directedness, a capability that is essential in

preparing lifelong learners for the complexities of today's workforce. Social media also brings with it the freedom for learners to connect and collaborate outside of institutional boundaries, as well as to gain practical experience for the workforce [7]. By using social media, students also have an opportunity to manage their own learning environments and thus become more independent, lifelong learners [8].

II. ELEARNING VIA FACEBOOK

The instructor can effortlessly create a closed or an open group, to share information, ideas, quizzes, questionnaires, materials, pictures, or even an entire page on a specific course or module. Students can freely talk about various course-related issues, questions they might have, post mutually interesting information and generally things they want to share. Facebook can be used by the instructor to share course resources, fire up discussions, promote collaboration, improve relationships between students, incorporate an array of learning tools (such as videos, images, boards, chatting and private messaging), and use it in conjunction with other social media platforms, like Twitter. Let's face it. Facebook has endless advantages that solidly prove its social learning value. An instructor can use Facebook in the following ways.

1. Create closed groups. Participants will enter only by invitation and no one else will be able to see the contents, discussions, posts etc. inside the group. It's a great and safe way to interact and bond.

2. Create open groups to attract a wider audience to a specific course, domain, application or even school. With over a billion Facebook users, the number of people that might be interested in various courses could become a large number.

3. Create polls to receive feedback about a course or a program, to request the opinion of the audience on a specific topic, or even to generate statistics. Possibilities and options are endless.

4. Create questionnaires to comprehend the likes, dislikes and interests of your current or future students and build the course around them.

5. Upload course contents, material and resources in your account or the closed group you created. Everything will be available 24/7, if a mistake is made, it can be corrected and re-uploaded, feedbacks are usually immediate and safe receipt confirmation, your material can be remotely accessed no matter where your students are, and you will effectively minimize classroom time.

6. Use all available learning and communication multimedia tools Facebook offers. There can be videos, presentations, images, pictures, discussion groups, chats, private messaging, sharing, liking, highlighting, and promoting. In short, a user-friendly interface that everyone will enjoy exploring.

7. Tell your students to connect their smartphones to Facebook, so they can receive instant notifications about all new messages and activities related to your course. Facebook's notification system allows everyone to keep track of anything new that happens; new groups, requests, discussions, comments, tagging, material, links etc.

8. Tell your students to subscribe to group update via RSS feeds for instant notifications and current information without even logging into the platform.

9. Create Facebook applications and try to generate an exciting canvas for developers to add new functionalities. A fun, interactive Facebook app will definitely get people involved in a New York minute.

10. Urge your students to introduce themselves, connect and collaborate. You can also create group assignments to further promote collaboration and improve relationships between them and you. It's true that hierarchy might be lost in the beginning, but you can always restore it, by setting the right tone, mood and style to your groups,

discussions and applications. Fun is good, but let's not forget the initial goal here; learning.

III. ELEARNING VIA TWITTER

In eLearning, it can be used as a backchannel to connect learning communities or smaller classrooms over a specific topic or event, to share highlights, make statements, upload pictures, etc. All instructors have to do is create an account and communicate its #hashtag to their students/followers. Twitter has many benefits when it comes to reaching your learners. There is so much information on it that is easily accessible, bite-sized and you can find virtually everything you need! An instructor can use Twitter in the following ways.

1. Create an informative list of resources before beginning, create a list of things you want to provide as information to your learners. Think what will be interesting, engaging and re-tweetable. Chunk it and post regularly, so you keep the interest of your learners.

2. Create learning hashtags come up with a #hashtag with the help of which learners will be able to feedback and communicate on the materials.

3. Create learning topics create topics, making use of the hashtags. In Twitter, you can also create regular Twitter chat events. Don't forget to encourage your learners by liking, re-tweeting and commenting on relevant tweets they share.

4. Create learning lists, you can create your own learning lists which basically is a curated group of Twitter users. This way you and your learners will be able to see the stream of your group's tweets.

5. Learn how to search Twitter has a powerful and accurate search engine that will help you get the information you need most. Get familiar with the Twitter trail.

6. Follow the influencers get in touch and follow interesting people from your field of

study – eLearning Developers, Instructional Designers, Subject Matter Experts, Professors and other experts – see what they share and what gets re-tweeted. Think about the things your learners will find interesting and will want to re-tweet.

7. Re-Tweet - Re-tweet and share everything you want your learners to know. Don't forget to encourage them by liking, re-tweeting, and commenting on relevant tweets they share.

8. Favorite - Show your appreciation by favorite a tweet. You will encourage the poster of the original Tweet by let him/her know that you liked the tweet. Also, by doing so you can save the Tweet for later review.

IV. ELEARNING VIA GOOGLE PLUS

Google Plus is an upraising star for social learning. Several eLearning professionals including this author believe that Google Plus is going to be the most popular social media that is used as a learning platform. But why? Google Plus communities have been used heavily as learning platforms and one of the major reasons is that both learners and facilitators are getting less distracted versus Facebook and Twitter. In addition, some educators believe "Students don't like to use their social networks for their studies. They want to keep their private life and faculty life separated". Last but not least, "The ability of Google Plus to host communities with video embeds, comments plus Google hangouts surely makes it the strongest social media platform for social learning".

V. ELEARNING VIA LINKEDIN

This is a purely professional, yet still social network, which has proven to be extremely useful in eLearning. Currently, there are thousands of discussions and groups in various languages, where instructors, educators and influencers share views, problems, developments and how-to tips. It has an even higher value compared to the previous social platforms, since students/participants can actually see everyone's professional profile and accomplishments, something that usually

determines the status of the discussion leader, organizer, or expert.

VI. ELEARNING VIA YOUTUBE

YouTube is an excellent resource for eLearning. It's free and can be used to support a class, while viewers can also rate the video's content and quality, as well as comment. These videos can be part of a course, but instructors can also use it to broadcast entire tutorials or just teasers to attract the audience they want.

Compared to Twitter, using YouTube for eLearning is more straightforward. In fact, there are tons of YouTube channels doing just that, e.g. providing foreign language lessons, cooking lessons, musical lessons, and everything in between.

This works great for material that can be taught visually, but YouTube doesn't make it easy to accompany your videos with textual content, slideshows, quizzes, etc. For this, you'll need an actual LMS platform. One shouldn't depend on YouTube ads to monetize your lessons, as it pays around \$1000 per million views, while producing compelling videos that attract as many viewers can require many times that amount. It's better to use YouTube as a complementary channel to your existing LMS portal, one that provides free or ad-sponsored teasers, free lessons and previews in order to attract people to sign-up for your pay-walled content.

If, on the other hand, you're not selling courses (e.g. you do enterprise eLearning) or you're not creating your own videos, you can still benefit from YouTube as a huge repository of ready-made content.

YouTube contains a large variety of high quality material on every subject, and modern LMS platforms, such as eFrontPro or Moodle, make it easy to embed its videos in your eLearning courses.

VII. ELEARNING VIA INSTAGRAM

Instagram is kind of like Twitter, but its limitation is that it's all about visual content, either pictures or video that's only up to 15 seconds long. Unlike YouTube, Instagram is not much good as a content repository to get course related material from. It's also more distracting and limited compared to Twitter (which is saying something). While Instagram might seem like a lost cause, it does have a couple of redeeming qualities.

For one, it can re-post your messages across several social media (Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and others, including China's hugely popular Weibo). So, you can use it as a convenient way of cross-posting your content to different audiences.

Second, it's popular with the younger demographic, and being based on photography and video, quite fun to use. You can leverage this by incorporating it in your assignments as a light research tool (asking your learners to gather images related to what they're studying, e.g. examples of buildings in various styles for an architectural course, etc.).

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

We had a look at the 6 most popular social networks, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, and Instagram. While not all social media platforms are equally fit for eLearning purposes, a successful eLearning program should take a good look in incorporating one or more of the major social media in its offering. Keep in mind though that each social media platform has its own strengths and weaknesses and it's own peculiar take on the concept of "social" that you should respect and try to work within its bounds.

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