
Editorial

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At the basis of this special issue is the fundamental questioned if and how social networking has an impact on the initiation and sustenance of web-based communities. In this editorial for the *IJWBC*, special issue Social networking for web-based communities the topics covered by the titles of the articles will be introduced. Social media for web-based learning communities: as the propagation of social media is fastest in the younger age group, we have prioritised this publication that has focused on students and learning contexts. The recent evolution based upon the internet is social networking. This new technology was introduced to facilitate communication, collaboration, contribution,

creativity and interaction among individuals and groups. Social networking is part of standard internet facilities like e-mail, browsing, and blogging.

Social networking provokes new types of communication, collaboration, participation, and innovative transaction formats among consumers, stakeholders, vendors, suppliers, universities and health departments. However, even more, social networking created brand new challenges for sectors as education and health. Social networking is potentially creating a catalytic movement in the education sector as they allow teachers to learn among themselves and experts in a more natural way than we knew before.

This special issue aims at articulating recent trends in social networking among stakeholders in the education sector. Sixteen scientists from eight different countries (South Korea, Turkey, Portugal, India, UK, Malaysia, Singapore and the USA) present their research finding around the main topic of this special issue: How and why college students use Web 2.0 applications: the role of social media in informal learning. Currently, more than 90% of the students, nationally and internationally, both in secondary- and in higher education are using the social media and social network sites (Martínez-Alemán and Wartman, 2009). However, until now, it is not quite clear how it affects students' learning, work and social life, and how will help students to integrate it in the existing student networks.

Students typically report that they register at Facebook in order to consolidate recent friendship and to reactivate relationships from the past. Less articulated was students' idea that social networking might be helpful in the formal part of their study courses. According to theories on social constructivism, it was expected that the social support would even help to keep students alert on the more intellectual goals of aspects of the social interaction through informal learning (Applefield et al., 2000).

Article 1: 'How and why college students use Web 2.0 applications: the role of social media in formal and informal learning'. The article topic is on college students who frequently use Web 2.0 applications or social media such as blogs, Facebook, and YouTube. Sun Joo Yoo and Sooyoung Kim aim to explain how and why college students use Web 2.0 applications and to explore the potential impact of social media on students' formal and informal learning. The results showed that students are using the online community for their formal learning while using instant messenger and social-networking tools for their informal learning. Authors also claim that further research is needed to investigate what aspects of Web 2.0 applications contribute to formal and informal learning.

Article 2: 'Students' approach to social network in educational context'. Social networks appeal to various types of interactive engagements and collaboration like learning, working, playing, etc. Yasemin Koçak Usluel and Deniz Atal see a fast evolution from the earlier social media like blogging and twitter up to the wider-scale systems like LinkedIn and Facebook. To understand and predict the various effects in the wide spectrum of social media, authors take a socio-technical perspective. The distinction between synchronous and asynchronous interaction is one of them. SMS and Twitter are almost real-time (synchronous) while Blogging and Facebook require more time to respond. Wikis need even more time and can be considered as asynchronous. Besides the immediacy as well as the degree of contextuality is of importance; some micro blogging and tweets start as quite a global discourse, but soon or later evolve into a situational discourse among its members. On the other hand, authors expect a variety of

social-networking systems that are all tuned to a certain bandwidth of topics, transactions and in case of learning to various specific domains and phases of learning.

Article 3: 'Social networks as spaces for informal teacher professional development: challenges and opportunities'. According to Clara Pereira Coutinho and Eliana Santana Lisbôa, the trend towards evidence-based practice can also be recognised for social media in the field of professionalising teachers, both pre- and in-service. Rather than being a platform for meeting other persons. Social networking like Facebook became prominent for working and learning mutually. Facebook already has thousands of teacher groups to share and comment lesson and didactic plans informally. 'Staff development' or 'in-service training' sessions are the default methods to improve teachers' skills. Since the social media evolved to build a collective notion on what is needed to make education more effective. Quite different are the tendencies in youth culture where students belong to. In social media, youngsters develop their skills, mentality and lifestyle. The interactive atmosphere among teachers via Facebook becomes more open, friendly and creative, as it is no longer just a matter of pedagogical/didactic authority who decides upon new best practices; it rather becomes as a living lab where the full reality is taken into account.

Article 4: 'Professors – the new YouTube stars: education through Web 2.0 and social network'. Teachers and professors can broadcast their lectures via podcasting and video servers so that their students can watch it at any moment at any location. However, the web also allows teachers to produce and compete with their lecturing quality to the wider world, using YouTube EDU, or iTunesU. Samant Saurabh and Ashok Singh Sairam describe that, like in genres as commercials, soap operas and classical music performances it is now the competitive comparison that enters the world of education.

Article 5: 'Social network intervention for the enhancement of students' social presence in relation to satisfaction and perceived learning', as participating via social network sites have already been labelled as 'virtual presence' it is without doubt that mediated communication will be considered seriously as the candidate for learning at a distance. Marva Mirabolghasemi and Noorminshah A. Iahad address the remaining question how far there is a positive transfer from the social is still under the research microscopes.

Article 6: 'Perceived usefulness of Facebook for teaching and learning: the student teacher's perspective'. Students themselves have a sense of satisfaction and in how far it depends merely on study results or also to one's presence during events and presence via social media like, for instance, Facebook, Wiki's, etc., But also Qiyun Wang, Huay Lit Woo, and Choon Lang Quek expect students to perceive the teachers' satisfaction. The key term for estimating the impact of social media in education is 'ownership': In how far feels the student that s/he is expected to arrange the learning around his or her prior knowledge and personal agenda? The answer may sound positive. However, it is still needed to find ways to prove and to promote it.

Article 7: 'The role of social media in self-regulated learning'. Self-regulation and self-organisation became important arguments in the 1980s when the role of direct instruction became trivialised: Yes, we can optimise learning by controlling the learner's environment. However, we also make the student more and more dependent from pre-arrangements. A question was raised, can social media reconcile between system-control and the full learner control? Is it conceivable that learners build up their own peer network and use it to promote their self-confidence and self-esteem to survive

in the complex environments? The teachers' social media have the potential to empower their professional attitude and build upon colleagues' more specific skills and knowledge. The term community of practice (CoP) was coined by Wenger (2009) and demonstrated that there is an essentially different type of learning process among professionals compared with the learning in curricular settings. Nada Dabbagh and Anastasia Kitsantas elaborate further on this important issue and present the data of their study.

Article 8: 'A sociologic evaluation: effects of social networking caused e-learning on university students'. Utku Köse presents a sociologic evaluation on effects of social networking caused e-learning on university students in Turkey.

For a long-time learning has been seen as an individual cognitive process. Vygotsky (1934/1986) has opened the awareness that the prime intellectual development rests upon social processes occasionally. In this special issue, a question was raised to measure how social networking based upon social media will bring a new incentive for collaborative learning and the team learning among teachers. The sociological question is if the main paradigm of learning as transfer from the expert to native teachers yet is affected or not? As it looks now, the notion of social constructivist knowledge development has already left behind a legitimation for education to see its curricula as momentary manifestations of societal needs and the desire to articulate existential solutions from the recent past. In this journal article, the authors provide a sociological evaluation on the effects of social networking.

As main conclusion we can say that education shows both inert- and evolutionary trends:

- Inertia because its main underlying paradigm is to see learning as a transfer – rather than as a developmental process.
- Evolution because society expects education to prepare students to the next-generation tools and infrastructures like social media and to accept that knowledge needs to be shared all the time.

The emanating question is if and how this mechanism of mutual learning between teachers will evolve according to mechanisms of the envisaged 'CoP'? One option is that indeed teachers will find each other and bypass institutional top-down regimes and subsequently undertake the learning as it is supposed to work out during life-long learning of their students.

The other option is that formal education will remain under the umbrella of institutional-, curricular- and certificate-driven programmes, where the teacher and the student is assessed as individual performers.

If this second option holds, social media will remain in a subsidiary role primarily; it will help both teachers and students to accommodate the formal learning process in order to achieve higher test scores. Also, the life cycle of new knowledge will perspire slowly into school curricula as its main concern is to transfer the existing curriculum.

References

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