

Chapter 14

Education via Social Net Sites: Challenges and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Incorporation of blended learning into educational process is complex and challenging. The chapter aims to elucidate educators' and students' engagement and attitude towards the use of computer-mediated communication and social net sites in general, and for educational purposes in particular, in order to single out the issues that are controversial and slow down the use of ICT in teaching practice. It presents university teachers' and students' opinions collected by observation and interviewing. The results of the study, based on the fourth-generation method of assessment, reveal that both students and educators are active users of SNS and are optimistic about their integration into educational process. However, despite all the advantages of SNS disclosed in the study, still there are some issues to overcome before SNS can become an integral part of educational process. At present, its use should be supported by other means like LMS or MOOCs as well as traditional on-campus activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, breakthroughs and innovations in technology have been implemented with acceleration. The invention of the radio and television were revolutionary achievements of the past, but the Internet, which appeared in the 80s of the XX century, has incomparable value. The Internet makes it possible for people of different nations and countries to communicate, regardless of geographic location or language, and socio-cultural features. The process of interaction from a predominantly verbal, including the extra-linguistic factors (gestures, facial expressions), shifts the emphasis on non-verbal communication (Romiszowski & Mason, 2007). Moreover, on-line contacts are distant and do not require the presence of the interlocutor.

Contemporary communication is preferably arranged by means of new information technologies, which speed up the process of collection, accumulation, storage, processing and transmission of various data. Taking advantage of this opportunity, new technologies were incorporated into the teaching process (Bulman & Fairlie, 2016; Ng, 2015). Along with technology enhanced learning, colleges and universities support faculty, and administration, as well as effectively market, recruit, enroll etc. via innovative web tools. Once the educational information is transferred by means of information and communication technologies (ICT), we may come across electronic learning. E-learning makes use of various electronic technologies, forms and components as its primary means of learning and teaching (Aparicio, Bacao, & Oliveira, 2017; Fryer & Bovee, 2016; Rosenberg, 2001; Snyder, 1998; Swan, Bowman & Holmes, 2003). Information and communication technology (ICT) provides several advantages from the point of view of both a teacher and a student. For instance, it helps educators deliver information and flip the class. Students and teachers can easily access materials and store them. There is also the opportunity for teachers to share their plans, slides, e-versions of elaborations, and so on (Baş, Kubiato & Sünbülç, 2016; Fryer & Bovee, H, 2016; Scherer, Siddiq & Teoc, 2015). In other words, ICT encourages socialization, sharing, creativity, authenticity and collaboration (Comi et al., 2017; Peachey, 2014; Thakur, 2015,). Arranging teacher-student collaboration by various means of ICT is fruitful and is gaining popularity with both learners and the teaching staff.

The aforementioned significance of ICT in modern educational process as well as the lack of relevant research conducted in Russia constitutes the main reasons that have motivated the current study. Currently, one of the most popular types of ICT used are social networking sites (SNS). Thus, this investigation of SNS use for educational purposes provides useful insights about the current status of SNS in higher education from a literature review triangulated with the opinion of faculty members and undergraduate students, using interviews and questionnaires. In

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