

Chapter 44

The Use of Social Media: Issues, Challenges, and Strategies for Adult Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides the readers with an overview of the use of social media technologies and how the media is applied in adult teaching and learning environment. It examines the current educational purpose of using social media based on a review of scholarly publications. The aim is to keep up-to-date changes in social media, and to better understand the paradigm shift, including the trends and issues pertinent to the application of social media in adult learning. The chapter reviews the literature on the benefit of using social media and provides strategies and guidelines for adult instruction using social media. The chapter discusses some challenges facing social media use in adult teaching and learning. The idea is to help the reader determine if social media is a valuable tool to improve learning and develop better instructional strategies for engaging students and stimulating academic dialogue using social media.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years the use of social networking services, such as Facebook or Twitter, has exceptionally expanded across the global world. Because the platform is highly interactive and multidimensional, social media has been popular and thus widely adopted for instructional purposes. As the number of the social media studies increases, it becomes essential that researchers and instructors investigate how the platform of the social media affects adult learning. Social media users not only have the power to share and connect with others, but also can instantly discuss and share all types of information and knowledge through the share status function. Although many scholars have suggested that social media may not always be appropriate or successful vehicles for formal teaching and learning activities (Salaway, Caruso & Nelson, 2007; Waycott et al., 2010), integrating social media for classroom instruction seems to be a feasible means for instructors to enhance learning. Therefore, there is a need to investigate whether or

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not the implementation of emerging social media can result in a positive impact on supporting learning processes and outcomes, especially for adult learners.

The chapter intends to provide the readers with an overview of the association between social media technologies and the nature of adult teaching and learning. The chapter seeks to examine current educational uses of social media based on a review of scholarly publications, and keep up-to-date on the paradigm shift as well as on the trends and issues pertinent to the development of social media. The chapter not only reviews the benefit of using social media, but also attempts to provide some strategies and guidelines for adult instruction. By outlining some fundamental issues and considerations, the chapter discusses some challenges of social media in teaching and learning also. The chapter can help readers in two folds: a) determine if social media is a valuable tool to improve teaching and learning, and b) develop better instructional strategies for engaging students and stimulating academic dialogue with social media.

Defining Social Media

Bryer and Zavattaro (2011) defined social media as technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders. Social networks can be defined as nodes of relationships that are used by people as a resource to solve problems, share knowledge, and make further connections (Wenger et al., 2011). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as the applications that are supported on the Internet and are based on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow creating and interacting with contents generated by users by open and free means. Similarly, Khan (2013) delineated that they provide opportunities to users to develop relationships, communication, and collaboration (sharing contents). A central feature of social media is the ability of users to establish an online group with which or whom to interact. Although this may range differently from a few family members to millions of followers, the presumption is that there is a selected group (Taylor, 2015). “Traditional” social networking sites include Facebook and the business-oriented LinkedIn (Taylor, 2015). Other examples of social media applications include Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, Skype, Wiki, blogs, Delicious, Second Life, open online course sites and forum, text messaging, online games, mobile apps, etc. (Cao et al., 2013).

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADULT TEACHING AND LEARNING

With social media becoming an integral part of million people’s lives, there is an increased use of social media in adult learning. The flexibility and adaptability of social media applications have the potential for customization of the learning process to the needs of each student and for accommodation of any adult learning style (LeNoue, Hall, & Eighmy, 2011).

Research reported different reasons why social media technologies could potentially benefit current teaching practices. First, young adults are already using such technologies in their private settings, and second, social media activities are understood to be important from a theoretical learning perspective (as cited in Awan et al., 2018). Apostolova (2013) pointed out the primary reason for adopting social media in teaching is because it is familiar to many adults from other areas of their life, and it is free of charge and requires minimal training.

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