

Chapter 4.2

Use of Social Software in Education: A Multiple Intelligences Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, numerous educational activities are presented for instructors in order to address each type of multiple intelligences. Most probably, these educational activities are those which are already being experienced by many instructors. The key point here is that although students are exposed to many educational activities, instructors generally don't have any idea or rather don't consider the learning outcomes in terms of multiple intelligences. In general, assessment activities are based only on the chunk of knowledge that the student gains after any particular activity. In fact, instructors should deal with the effects and improvements in students other than just the knowledge, after engagement in educational activities. Thus, instructors should base their instructional plans on a theoretical basis,

especially when integrating technology into their courses. Hence, the development and changing activities and other tasks of social software according to the multiple intelligences that underline individual differences were discussed briefly in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Innovations in technology have led to the transformation of face to face interaction to online environments in past two decades. Many virtual communities have been constituted, for realizing different purposes by means of various technologies. Starting with the oldest and inevitably used technology, which we call e-mail, communication patterns and thus technologies have changed into discussion lists, forums, chat rooms and more recently blogs and wikis. These technologies are primarily used in

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business, nevertheless they have swiftly entered into and extended education. Hence, the latest technologies are used widely in most educational institutions today. The three common approaches for using of technology are to support to traditional instruction, blended learning, and e-learning. Among these alternatives, blended learning is the most prevailing as it has much more advantages than traditional instruction and e-learning (Horton, 2000). Blended learning takes the advantages of the strengths of classroom techniques together with web based training. Thus, the teaching-learning process occurs both in the classroom setting and the virtual environment, and all stakeholders can communicate both face-to-face and online.

Together with integration of the popular approaches, the usage of educational social software has moved forward greatly in distance education and e-learning at first. Afterwards, traditional learning and e-learning have begun to be used together - under the title of blended learning - by possessing the different benefits of both traditional learning and e-learning. In that process research studies have begun to be conducted in order to find out how effective all existing technologies are? Since the emergence of communication tools, many research studies have been conducted to maintain the effectiveness of these tools. Moreover, the results of these research studies have brought about the existence of the field known as computer-mediated communication (CMC).

In order to determine the success of these platforms, studies about students' and instructors' preferences and opinions about social software, content analysis of written posts or logs from the systems, interaction patterns and levels, which point out the usage of these social tools were conducted. Although the effectiveness of communication tools has been investigated from multiple perspectives by using different research methods in various settings, these studies currently do not contain the necessary theoretical framework. Nevertheless a number of conceptual frameworks, such as individual differences, social learning,

collaborative learning and constructivism, frequently seemed to be used by many studies for establishing the theoretical foundation. However, the effectiveness of learning is a major concern in these environments since online environments are social platforms. It is necessary to make different theories for clarifying available communication patterns or educational activities in order to reach a more generalized and reliable result.

Under the lights of discussions, educational activities and tasks in these platforms must be constructed according to the theoretical framework. Thus, this chapter aims to discuss the development and changing activities and other tasks of social software according to the multiple intelligences that underline individual differences.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY

“Multiple Intelligences Theory”, proposed by Gardner (1993), approaches learning and instruction from a different perspective. Some researchers have claimed that our intelligence or ability to understand the world around us is a changing process, where people show diversity in terms of understanding and learning. Abilities in performing different skills may differ from individual to individual. One person may be good at playing a musical instrument; one individual may be good at playing football and another maybe good at writing poems. These differences among people are addressed in the multiple intelligences theory. To give an example, if an individual has strong spatial or musical intelligences, instructors should encourage those students to develop these abilities. Gardner points out that the different intelligences represent not only different content domains but also learning modalities.

Howard Gardner viewed intelligence as the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Although Gardner initially proposed a list of seven intelligences, he

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