

# Chapter 10

## Twitter in Higher Education: New Pedagogy in the Knowledge Era of Globalization

**Krishna Bista**

*University of Louisiana – Monroe, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*Twitter as a micro-blog in higher education has been considered a new pedagogical tool for social and academic communications among educators and students since its inception in 2006. Twitter provides space and opportunities for students and faculty to engage in social and academic activities as a new pedagogical tool. Despite the limited research on Twitter as a learning tool, a significant number of educators in the US, the UK, Australia, and other parts of the world have used Twitter to interact with students, to share course information, and to collaborate research among educators. This chapter presents existing literature on Twitter and debates on the usage of Twitter in higher education as a learning pedagogy.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, researchers and educators have significantly used and participated in online social networking in higher education. Online social media has strengthened the digital knowledge of educators at the global level. Digital invention mainly in the field of Web-based literacy has bridged the gap between the technologically advanced and less-advanced countries. Research

on social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and foursquare) has explored the relationship between educational outcomes and social networking (Gouseti, 2010; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010), student and faculty relationships (Malesky & Peters, 2012; Veletsianos, 2012), and student engagement and social presence (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009; Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2013).

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In this digital era, younger students and a growing number of instructors are technologically driven to engage in social media (Veletsianos, 2012). These students and their faculty are socially networked among peers and friends. According to the Pearson research, about 60 percent of faculty out of 1921 participants reported using at least one social media site monthly (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011). In the *Faculty Focus* survey, 16.5 percent of higher education faculty out of 840 participants reported using Twitter daily compared to 44.6 percent of faculty using Facebook (Bart, 2011). In another study, about nearly half (46.5 percent) of faculty out of 831 never used Twitter, but 11.4 percent of them were willing to use Twitter in the future (Faculty Focus, 2010). However, there are debates on the effectiveness of the use of different social networking sites in an educational context. Through the use of online learning spaces, scholars and educators have advocated ways to engage diverse students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Opinion varies regarding the use of social networking sites as instructional tools with a promotional purpose to socially connect with students and alumni. Although in the past few years, social networking in higher education has been a rapidly growing phenomenon, research on Twitter is in its early stages (Veletsianos, 2012).

Twitter is a fairly new social networking site that offers micro blogging services. It offers learners and educators opportunities to interact via Twitter posts, also called Tweets, on Smartphones, laptops, iPods, and any devices with Internet access. Twitter is the most popular free application, with almost one million users who can send and receive messages via the Web, short message service (SMS), instant message clients, and through third party applications (Grosbeck & Holotescu, 2008). When Twitter is used for class discussion, it facilitates students' skills of summarization by consolidating their thoughts with concise and precise syntactic structure and vocabulary in their tweets (Bart, 2010). Moreover,

Twitter can be used for promoting and disseminating opinions, articles, and quotes (Grosbeck & Holotescu, 2008).

This chapter briefly discusses the use of Twitter as social media pedagogy in disseminating information concerning higher education. It also includes a comparative analysis of positive and negative perceptions regarding the application of Twitter in higher education classrooms, student engagement inside and outside the classroom, and research on collaborative interactions among education in research application.

## RELATED LITERATURE

In the age of digital literacy, there are different academic and non-academic communities, cultures and sub-cultures across the globe. The techno-literate practice is not well defined as young people are becoming digital natives, and old people are becoming digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001). In less than a decade of history of social media (LinkedIn was founded in 2002, Facebook in 2004 and Twitter in 2006), academic societies are gradually experiencing social media and their effectiveness in higher education as pedagogical tools. Today's learners are socially, culturally, and technologically different from the learners of past decades because of the rapid digital innovation in higher education. Learning communities inside and outside the classroom are more diverse linguistically and demographically. To engage technically savvy learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, researchers have advocated the importance of incorporating social media as pedagogical tools (Blair, 2013; Limbu, 2011; Rockinson-Szapkiw & Szapkiw, 2011).

In this context of Web 2.0 classroom practices to meet the competing demands and challenges led by globalization and evaluation in social media usages in teaching and learning, Twitter has been used distinctively in college education across dis-

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