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Lifelong learning through out today's occasions namely social media and online games

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Abstract

We no longer can imagine a close environment without media and communication tools today. Recently millions of people use social media tools and play online games. This study is about the way of engagement with social media and online games, aim is to link this ways with education to enable student engagement and interest. Emotional, individual, and collective rewards, progress measuring bars, long and short time aims, rapid feedbacks and dialogs, connective community, and many other causes of why we involve to social media and online games are explored to facilitate lifelong learning in this study.

Keywords: Social Media, Online Games, Engagement, and Education.

1. Introduction

It's impossible to ignore that by the influence of new technologies the world has entered a new era. Our daily lives have been dramatically affected by use of these new technologies. Publishing a family weeding or a party on Facebook or arranging a high school meeting and commending on it by Tweeter is one of a vital part of the communication process. Apart from social media platforms many students and people prefer to play online games because it's a way to easily steer away from difficulties of life and have fun.

A growing number of education professionals are seeing traditional textbook and test based education remains in past. Curiosity, imagination, collaboration, sense of confidence etc. are largely supplied by those technologies. "Students are so accustomed to using this technology that when they enter a classroom they often "cut off" from this vital connection, as they see it."(Gerlich, et al, 2010).

This paper works to examine the ways and reasons of students being engaged with social media tools and online gaming, tries to find out the most used functions in these technologies then draw some conclusions to ways to link those tools with education to enhance learning.

2. What is social media? Why we use it, used to it?

Social media refers to a number of social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Foursquare, and Myspace, in addition video sharing sites like Youtube. Blogging platforms such as Wordpress, Typepad, and Blogspot, can also included. Skype, MSN messenger, and a number of other chat programs often linked to Web-based communication platforms.

Generally a social media platform provide their user a profile, a friend list, chat option and ability to sent private or public massage, create event, comment and get feedback etc. From a general perspective we may say that what

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they have in common is that they are easy to use, free to sign in, generally entertaining and most importantly they represent the today's youth.

In the article Using Social Media to Engage Youth: Education, Social Justice, & Humanitarianism Belle Liang, Meghan Commins and Nicole Duffy mentioned "Today's youth represent the first cohort to grow up fully wired and technologically fluent. Having been born roughly post 1990, during the time access to the internet and web-enabled technology became widely available, these adolescents and emerging adults have been called "digital natives," to distinguish them from the "digital immigrants" who preceded them (Prensky, 2001). In the United States alone, among the 33 million digital natives ages 10 to 19, 90% have access to the Internet at home, and 73% have access on a school computer (Nielsen Company, 2009). On average, U.S.teenagers spend 24 hours and 54 minutes a month on the web or using internet-enabled software (Nielsen Company, 2009). And what they are doing online is not a mystery: 68% of teenagers report accessing mobile video, with 54% of these youth using their phones to download and watch music content. Nearly half of online teens ages 12 to 17 visited MySpace or Facebook in May 2009, accounting for 28% of MySpace's page views and 12% of Facebook's during that time (Nielsen Company, 2009)." (Liang, B. et al. 2010)

Based on these statistical values, the first question generally comes to minds of various brands, strategists, educators, and parents is, Well What do youth take away from the commitment of this activity and why is that? The answer of this question is important for those brands, strategists, plus parents and mostly for educators to understand students and meet them on their demand.

In 2008-2010 research conducted at Hypermedia Laboratory of Tampere University of Technology (TUT). Students were asked what are the main characteristics of social media enhanced learning and what motivates students to use social media services in an educational context (K. Silius, et al. 2011).

The following issues were highlighted in students' answers. Social media tools are easy to use, suitable tool for promoting different events for students, it was motivating to follow friends' events, content and profile information, content feeds in a user dashboard were considered to be motivating. A function like or dislike content and features was desired, likewise listings of the most popular content, users, actions, etc (K. Silius, et al. 2011).

Another research study was made at central campus of the University Houston in 2009 with a total number of 221, which resulted that three top-used social media tools are Facebook, Wikipedia and Youtube. Top reasons for using those are listed as; social engagement, direct communication; speed feedback, and relationship building (Liu, Y. 2010).

Figure 1 shows the Student Knowledge Level of Top 7 Social Media Tools and figure 2 shows the main reasons driving social media adaptation (Liu, Y. 2010).

	Facebook	Forum	Blogging	YouTube	Podcasting	Twitter	Wiki
Very Knowledgeable	31%	24%	14%	41%	10%	8%	30%
Knowledgeable	39%	33%	37%	41%	28%	22%	47%
Somewhat Knowledgeable	29%	39%	41%	16%	42%	45%	21%
Not at all Knowledgeable	1%	4%	8%	2%	20%	25%	2%

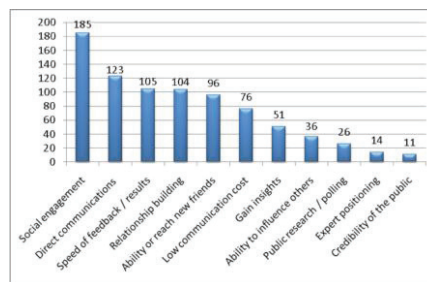Figure1. Student Knowledge Level of Top 7 Social Media Tools

Figure2. Main Reasons Driving Social Media Adoption

As mentioned in the second figure most used social medias are Facebook, Twitter YouTube and Wikipedia. Students reason for using those medias and the ones most used by them can be inspiring for educators to use same reasons of adaptation to social media to enable student engagement in classical teaching. Also they can extend learning environment out of the school to life-long learning.

2.1 Facebook

Facebook has the following features: user's profile, status, friends, news feed, wall, discussion boards, photo tagging, and applications. Teachers can use same tools in different ways, as asking their students to bring photos, making discussions in creative manner, adding like or dislike points. Additionally with its features, Facebook could be a wonderful tool for building a sustainable and life-long learning social network for building an outside school community-learning environment. Instructor can take advantage of this open environment to completely involve students in learning. For example, students can spread the discussions or activities to the public and to find out not only what peers think about, but also what are public's opinions

2.2 YouTube

YouTube might be used as visual aid for students to better observe the learning content and videos can be used as research resources. Additionally TeacherTube for teachers to upload instructional materials and share with other educators might be a useful tool for instructors to review on their curriculum.

2.3 Twitter

Twitter is another social engagement tool that is been using by students. There is extended survey made by Lock Haven University, semester-long experimental study to determine if using Twitter for educationally relevant purposes can impact college student engagement and grades. Twitter was used for the fallowing activities as an educational tool. Continuity for class discussions, book discussion, low-stress way to ask questions, As reminder of sequence of courses and due dates for assignments or for exams in multiple classes via one Twitter feed, for providing academic and personal support, Helping students connect with each other and with instructors, Organizing study groups etc. (Junco, et al. 2011).

The examination of tweet content resulted to show that students were motivated and engaged with each other, actively engaged in thoughtful and personally meaningful conversation, were enthusiastic about collaborative learning and they show success on their grades.

For their investigation R. Junco, et al. written "our results suggest that Twitter can be used to engage students in ways that are important for their academic and psychosocial development. We were able to leverage Twitter to support Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education:

• We improved contact between students and faculty (principle 1) by providing an avenue for contact congruent with their digital lifestyles.

• The use of our Twitter protocol also encouraged cooperation among students (principle 2) – students used Twitter to ask each other questions, not only about the material in the first-year seminar course, but also about material in other courses. Students also collaborated on their service learning projects via the Twitter feed, provided emotional support to each other, and created and scheduled real-world study groups via Twitter.

• The Twitter assignments promoted active learning (principle 3) by helping students relate the course material to their own experiences both inside and outside of the classroom.

• Twitter allowed us to provide prompt feedback (principle 4) to students, not only for their assignments, but also for a wide variety of questions and issues they faced. For example, a few students tweeted about having trouble viewing an online video that was required for the course, and within 10 min we provided feedback as to how they could solve the problem.

• One of the great benefits of using Twitter in this way with our first-year experience courses was that we were able to maximize time on task (principle 5). The course only met for an hour each week; however, thanks to the Twitter stream, we were able to continue discussion and build a strong learning community among students.

• We used Twitter to communicate high expectations (principle 6) in student's academic work, service learning projects, and out-of class activities.

• Lastly, using Twitter showed a respect for diversity (principle 7) because, in addition to discussing diversity issues via the Twitter feed, we encouraged students who otherwise may not be active participants in class to participate online.

3. Social media conclusion

Since social networks are highly new and growing, more studies on their uses in educational context must be explored more. But based on several statistical researches, a substantial number of students spent non-negligible time on such social networks. To meet this new trend social media can offer an engaging educational arena by their main tools. As mentioned by researchers motivation for active learning, independence from time and location, engagement among students and faculty, offering the student ability to repeat course content as much as desired, interactivity (applications to students via simulation, animation, and virtual laboratories) and instant feedback what are present on social media might attract attention of students and improve their skills in educational playground.

4. What is online gaming? Why we play?

Freitas and Griffiths give explanation of online game as follows; "Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) offer a rich and unpredictable three-dimensional environment for players to experience a virtual world through their own player character along with thousands of other players. This game form is a fully developed multiplayer universe with an advanced and detailed world (both visual and auditory)" (Freitas and Griffiths,2007).

Today, students seek for different and new ways of interaction and individualization; the classical "one size fits all" curriculum might not be pleasant for them. MMORPG is becoming widespread form of entertainment and socialization. One possible solution would be to include some motivator factors, by this means gaming and its tools can be considered. Moreover gaming by itself could be also considered as sort of learning. We can observe that gamers learn in gaming phase naturally. Mainly gamers learn all techniques and rules quite easily to keep on the game even without reading the guidelines.

In his article "Developing an Interactive Video Game-Based Learning Environment" Jui-Hung Chen; et al. listed main game play behaviors and reasons of being engaged as from the perspective of Prensky M. and Merill, et al as below.

"Game provides some degree for enjoyment. Game has playing mode corresponding with game type. Game has an obvious and significant goal. Game has an interactive mode. Game provides the gaming feedback and the related result. Game designing could be suitable for player. Game has winning reward. Game has conflict, competition, challenge and opposition factors. Game has a pilot with problem solving. Game has a character of narrative. Merill, et al [5] mentioned that game have four necessary properties as follows: Learners are not forced to play game. Learners could have fun in the gaming phase. Games have clear and definite goal and playing rules. Games have competition and challenge essential factors" (Jui-Hung Chen, 2009).

If we outline mostly researches specify few important reasons of continuous participating of game flow which are; exploration, collaboration with peers, considering point of view of others, trial and error, strategic thinking and making choose and receiving constant feedback. Those motivations can be attached to side of academia and life.

Game conlusion

in addition to influencing by the tools or reasons of engagement to those tools, online games have great encouraging potential to use their interactive entertainment value. Those game may provide innovative environment for experimental learning. For instance " Second Life" an online virtual game where user creates an avatar and then explores the world as that avatar by help of the applied powers as shrinking down and walking through the human

body, becoming another gender or race, flying above a cityscape to see patterns or green space, can be an additional educational tool for teaching science concepts.

5. Conclusion: How can we advance learning by using social media and gaming tools?

The interactivity that increases day by day due to improving technology laid the ground for new opportunities, which one of them is education. Social networks and online games are new communication environment for students. Educational arena might focus on what students already use rather than forcing them to use what schools want. Social networks and online games enable new experience, interaction, and collaboration. They are both encouraging to practice as plug-in and inspiring for more flexible education. We might use those mediums and influence from their tools. New studies might be conducted to find out more on this subject. Social networks and online games might only be a tool for a creative learning process both for students and individuals for life-long learning.

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