

**NOVEL TOOLS FOR IMPARTING HIGHER EDUCATION: A REVIEW**

Sonia Mahindru
PG Deptt. Of Comp. Sc. & IT
HansRaj Mahila Maha Vidyalaya
Jalandhar, Punjab, India

Abstract: Social media tools are rapidly changing the communication, learning and thinking scenario all around the globe. Emergence of these tools has greatly affected how students learn and the way teachers teach. In today's higher education system, teachers, students, and others work together on the tasks of knowledge construction. Faculty is using a variety of software tools and free web applications to improve learning, increase interactions between teachers and students, immediate exchange of information and engagement. The utilization of social media tools is on the rise in higher education classrooms. Social network services offer a variety of tools that learners can mix and match to enhance their individual learning styles and to maximize their academics. Tools are helping in improving class notes, prepare better assignments, conduct discussions, encourage synergistic work, and authoring. By using social media tools students are actively participating in knowledge creation for themselves and their fellow classmates thus changing the flow of information from 'unidirectional to multidirectional'. This paper focuses on most popular social media tools and explores the potential of these tools as learning spaces for students in the higher education. Also the use of these tools has greatly enhanced the teaching learning process thus proving to be very beneficial for the students.

Keywords: Podcast, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, social media, YouTube

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is an internet form of application which is mostly used for communication purpose. A social media tool allows users to have interaction, share data and build web content. There are various forms of social media that includes wikis, blogs, social networking sites, instant messaging, video-sharing sites, photo-sharing sites, widgets etc. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube composes of internet based technologies that intensifies interaction between individuals as well as organizations. The strengths of social media includes immense access and personalized user profiles that allow the addressing specific audiences for education, marketing entertainment etc. Social media offers multiple choices for learning in the classroom, encourage collegial functioning, access worldwide resources and discover new and fascinating ways to communicate in one easily accessible place.

Teachers are using a variety of software tools and free web applications to improve learning, communication, and engagement. The use of social media is increasing in higher education classrooms. With increased use of web 2.0 social software communication and data exchange are not limited to few instead it is for anyone and everyone. It has brought academics from classrooms to public space. By using these tools, academic content, discussions, and other interactions no longer live in the safe, controlled world of academia but now become public - living on public servers.

II. SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Social media technologies possess potential for both receiving and making content with the hope that a collaborative intelligence emerges. The main aim of using these tools is to boost students learning skills, to prepare them to enter a human resource that is not geographically

restricted and expects them to have extremely developed online collaboration skills. Recognition of such benefits drives educationist to incorporate new technological approaches in their teaching methodology. Social media tools that are changing the way instructors teach and students learn include the following:

A. Podcast

Podcast is a periodical series of digital audio or video files which can be downloaded by any user. It is emerging as a novel tool in education, which is helping students in many ways for gaining education, improving learning and encouraging deep thinking. The following literatures show that podcast possesses significant educational capabilities which can be used for higher education.

Podcast can be used for various purposes in education. It can be used for recording lectures for students, who are unable to attend classes because of some reasons. It can also be used to record lectures which can be used by students to review in their free hours. Textbook chapters can also be recorded, which helps students to review the chapters while doing other activities [1].

In a study author deduced that podcasting provides students with different ways of learning. Students can actively listen to lectures without taking any notes or students can use podcast of original lecture to review or make changes in their notes [2].

Podcast can be used at anytime and at anyplace but in a research with Australian university students. Author concluded that students did not use podcasts 'on the go' instead it was used as a dedicated study time resource which students accessed via their computers usually at home [3].

In a research conducted by taking journalism students. It was reported that 40% of the students think that podcast is a replacement to textbooks and not an additional revision material. [4].

Podcast of lectures can be downloaded by students and listened again and again by them at any time and at any

place. It shows that podcast provides time shifting potential. It also encourages deep and analytical thinking among students.[5].

Studies show that there are many learning based reasons for using video podcasts which includes preparing for class [6], self checking for understanding [7], obtaining a global overview of chapters read [7] and taking better notes [8].

B. Facebook

A Number of literatures on social networking service Facebook are presented that show Facebook is a tool that could and should be used in classrooms today.

There are a number of reasons for using Facebook into the classrooms. Among many one is that Facebook is a cost-effective teaching resource. The network is already set-up and functioning well. Also most students are already using it either on mobiles or computers. Another reason is that Facebook provides internet based learning. And in Internet based learning students are more actively involved as compared to old ways of teaching in a classroom [9]. Many studies show that students who are taught in a web-enhanced class, their performance is much better than students who are taught in a traditional lecture delivering style in a classroom. The basic reason behind this is that students are more actively involved in learning when they are using web based tools. Active learning involves higher levels of cognitive learning and can help maximize student concentration duration .

In another study various issues surrounding using Facebook in higher education were discussed. Facebook is a network that connects millions of students together, thus indirectly creating a perfect learning community. Facebook increases teacher /student interaction in the form of web-based communication. Facebook helps teachers to create connectivity with students. They can communicate relating to assignments, upcoming events, post useful links, and samples of work, all outside the classroom. Students are able to contact other fellow classmates about some questions on assignments, queries on exams and work together in an online group [10].

In another analysis author used The Communication Privacy Management Theory to give some guidelines for using social networking sites like Facebook. The theory laid stress on using boundaries to “distinguish between public relationships and private information”. Teachers can establish public relationships with the students in the classrooms and prevent the disclosure of their personal information. Teachers must determine what details need to be hidden in order to avoid negative results [11]. In this study author gave some valuable suggestions to teachers who plan to use Facebook in their curriculum. Facebook should be used as a teaching tool and only required data should be posted on the respective Facebook page. There should be similarity between a teacher’s Facebook page and the way they present themselves as individual. As students want teachers to be themselves on Facebook [11].

C. Twitter

Twitter is the most popular micro blogging service, allowing user to connect by posting short messages called “tweets”. Upcoming Literatures highlight use of twitter in education and emerging as innovative teaching tool.

In a study conducted at a public university in the mid-southern United States author reports that there are four major reasons that twitter is used by students. For gaining immediate and frequent information about the course they have joined. For asking questions to the mentors in order to solve their queries. Next for making changes in the course assignments and lastly for sharing any data other than textbook information with their fellow classmates and teachers [12].

In another study scholars from different countries like USA, Canada, Spain and Portugal were researched about their naturalistic practices in social networks generally and on twitter specifically. Author came to conclusion that, students used twitter for sharing the course work, for interacting with each other and to connect with professionals or experts in their study area [13].

Many studies show that twitter has been used by instructors in different universities for delivering various courses. Twitter was used at Western Illinois University, USA in order to teach undergraduate students of Sociology and Anthropology courses [14]. It was also used at University of California to teach in a literature class of 30 undergraduate students [15]. At Taiwanese college for teaching English [16] and in a university in the Midwest in USA twitter was used in delivering a Public Relation course in order to examine its effectiveness [17]. Different studies depict that Twitter has proved to be a very beneficial tool in education. It provides an ideal space on which students and teachers instantly interact, either inside or outside the classroom.

D. Weblogs

Of the new Web 2.0 technologies, weblogs have become a familiar tool in recent years for many educators. Weblogs are personal web pages written in a sequential order and maintained through a specific software that helps their administration. There is emerging literature highlighting the benefits of using blogs for teaching and learning in higher education.

Main objective for many university programmes is for students to become effective communicators. This includes written as well as oral communication. Most of the graduates lack the professional skills and capabilities that are important for success in their careers. Written communication is one of the professional skills in which most graduates lack or are inadequately prepared. Writing blog entries could help improve students’ writing ability [18].

Another learning goals for many university programmes is for students to be self-directed, reflective learners. To advance from surface to deep learning students need to make meaning of new information. Reflection is an important prerequisite for deep and meaningful learning and this can be achieved using strategies such as journal writing that would not only promote reflection but also deep thinking and learning [19]. Therefore, the most fascinating and notable use of blogs in education may be to use it to promote reflective learning.

Another study suggested that educational applications of blogs include reflecting and expressing individual thought. Because of reflective nature of blogs, the greatest instructional potential for students may therefore be its use as a knowledge log and reflective tool. Reflection requires students to express their opinions and feelings which they

may be reluctant to do if they know that others can read and comment on their entries [20].

Blogs can also be used as an assessment tool. A study was conducted for first year engineering students to examine the strengths and weaknesses of using online tools such as blogs for assessment purposes. In the study, blogs were used by the students for regular bi-weekly journal entries which were assessed [21].

E. YouTube

Another very popular and most used tool is YouTube which allows billions of users to watch, download, upload and share original created videos. YouTube is a vast reservoir of information which can be explored by students, teacher’s and educationist for creating, exchanging information and encouraging learning.

Marketing, management and entrepreneurial courses were researched using YouTube and the author deduced that videos promote learning, engagement and thrill among students in the classroom [22].

Due to YouTube’s ease of use, many think that teachers are no longer necessary. But teachers play a very important role. They are the ones who select the appropriate videos to be played in the classroom and then initiate discussions to meet a certain aim [23].

YouTube educational videos help in developing interest of students in subject, which results in more and faster learning of subject [24].

YouTube provides the students with the provision to receive information from guest speakers, without actually having the guest speaker present in the classroom [25].

Videos can both encourage and engage students when it is incorporated into student-centered learning activities, including increased motivation, improved communication skills and overall higher marks [26].

Videos have turned out to be a typical educational distribution medium owing to the cut back price of production. Video sequences can be easily brought into the classroom with technology that means videos are no longer to be used for presenting instead for creating a network of learners [27].

III. BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN EDUCATION

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to Create Group Discussions.
TWITTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter can be used as a bulletin board. To update course assignments. To receive immediate and frequent course information. To ask questions to the instructor. Collating classroom views. Communicating with experts. Vocabulary building. Information, resource and media sharing.
WEBLOGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves students writing ability Promotes reflective learning Used as assessment tool. Good tool for writing assignments. Increases interest in learning. Used for collaborative and cooperative learning. Enhance student’s critical and analytical thinking skills.
YOUTUBE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos inspire learning, engagement and excitement in the classroom. Videos are powerful discussion catalysts. Videos are means towards achieving learning goals and objectives.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through this study the author has tried to review most popular social media tools like facebook, twitter, weblogs, podcast, YouTube and the way they can enhance teaching/learning, act as teaching tool in classrooms and provide numerous benefits in higher education. Use of these tools in education not only provide fast communication and enhance effective flow of information and idea sharing among students, social media has actually impacted in some pessimistic performance of students and also have increased the ability of the students to learn new things at a faster rate and quickly.

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PODCAST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Podcasting allows students to review and make changes in their notes after listening to a podcast of original lecture. Podcast is used for recording lectures for students who are unable to attend classes. Podcasts can be used for repeated listening. Podcast is a substitute for traditional classroom teaching. Podcasts provide extra lecture materials. Podcasting promotes deep and logical thinking.
FACEBOOK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook is a cost-effective teaching resource. Increases teacher /student interaction in the form of web-based communication. Use as learning management system. Used to post class notes.

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