



# USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACADEMIC PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS PROS & CONS: A REVIEW

**Sri Manoj kumar Behera**

*Assistant Professor, P.G. Department of Commerce, Vikram Deb (Autonomous) College, Jeypore*

## ABSTRACT

*Social media is a set of information technology applications based on web services. It is also known as Web 2.0. This enables the users to create and share the content actively in an open platform. The new generation students are being called as millennial who uses the social media (Facebook and twitter) in particular for their social interaction as well as for the learning. Now a day, it has been found that social media are being used significantly in higher education as the educators or instructors are looking forward to use the technology for the better communication and promote easy learning for the students. In this regard many scholars argue that the social media should integrate into the academic practices in the higher education as an educational tool. Whereas there is no significant evidences are available in the literature regarding the empirical studies in this area. However, the empirical evidences available are fails to support the claim as most of the existing empirical studies in this area are done on the basis of the self-reported data like surveys and questionnaires and some study has done on content analysis. In this paper, the researcher tries to review and summarise the existing studies and to propose the future areas of the research and also discusses the pros and cons of the said topic.*

**KEY WORDS:** *social media, web 2.0, higher education, academic practices etc.*

## INTRODUCTION

There will be few people who were unaware of the emergence of the social media, particularly the applications such as Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Wikipedia etc. even the casual users of internet will now be aware of the various social sites and expose to the virtual world. Since 2006, these social sites are plays the dominant role among the digital technology is used around the world. Though there are variations in the cultural or geographical within the world whereas the people from different areas uses different social sites but the social media principles remain same. That is to interact with each other, share the contents, music, videos, textual contents etc. possibly the main characteristic of all the social media sites is to harnessing the collective actions of users in online communities i.e, mass socialisation (Shirky, 2008). The growth of social media has changed the ways the end users are experienced the internet. It is no longer a one-way communication technology where the individuals only download the data and other resources. Instead, the social media is now helps the internet users to connect many-many connectivity rather than one to many. Social media are more open rather than closed applications by the help of these end users can easily share, rate, remix and chat with friends and trends.

The internet is totally different today to that of 10 years back.

During these developments in the technology, the educational institutions are expected to find themselves in the digital world and to use the social media application for the betterment of the academics practices. As it has been observe that there is always a gap between the technological users and the rest of the society can be mark out from the introduction of film and radio in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Without any doubt the social media will remain an area of expectation and overemphasis. Therefore it is important for the higher educators or the educational institution to consider social media in an objective manner. This study is emphasis on what are the features of social media and its significance to higher education. How these social Medias are being used by the educators and educational institution of higher education and what are the necessary changes need to make by the higher education to cope up with this fast changing digital world.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data and it has been collected from the well-known specialised databases like EBSCOhost, Web of Science, Google scholar, science direct etc. in addition to that Google scholar is being used to collect the existing study by



searching by this key words like social media, role of social media, social media in higher education etc.

### **Significance of social media for higher education**

According to Halpin et.al (2010) the web has always provides the services like exchange messages , maintain personal profiles, create list of friends and write in the blogs like journal entries etc since the early 70s and it has always been social. But the change in technological world challenges the web 2.0 to re branding and re versioning itself. Current application of social media is different from the earlier internet services in term of scale of use. As compare to earlier number of users of internet, now the users of social media has drastically changes and increases like anything. So it is a challenge for the new social media applications to be benefiting the mass users and giving collective benefit and social significance. The wide applications of social media can create opportunity as well as the problems for us. To supporting to this Christakis et. all (2009) said in his paper that as a part of social network, we can go beyond ourselves for become good or bad, and became a part of something much larger.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In spite of most discussions on social media have a habit of focusing either on prosaic or very reflective (e.g. in Iran and Egypt, social media effected by making them narcissism or making them to support the popular revolts). The question remains the same what is the significance of social media in higher education? From the studies it has been found that number of educationalist are growing in implication of social media for educational practice and provision in particularly in higher education. This can be discussed under three different lines.

### **Social media use by students in higher education**

According to Browning et. all (2011), the baby boomers, millennial and generationXers (all college students) are habituating of using various technologies in many aspects of their lives. Today's student using computers, laptops, tablets, smart phones daily basis for chatting, browsing, messaging, content developing and spare more time on the social networking sites like Facebook and twitter etc. and also exposed themselves for online learning, sharing and much more (Cassidy et. al(2011).The recent researches reveals that, now a day most of the students and faculty are using different technologies and platforms in their daily lives, particularly social media (Facebook, twitter, YouTube etc.) (Browning, et. al.,2011; Chen, et. al., 2012). However the percentage of users using social media for academic purposes are found to be very low (Chen et. al, 2010;Lenhart, et.al., 2010;Tiryakipglu, et.al.,2010).

According to the report of Pew Research Centre, America highlights the use of social media by the individuals in United States in 2009. It reveals that the numbers of users registered in various social sites are increasing to the prior years. Out of all the respondents 73% of the users are choosing Facebook as their social networking site. 48% of respondents maintain their profile in LinkedIn and MySpace.19% of respondents are using Twitter and 4% respondents use social media as their second life. From this research it has been found that only 30% people use the social media for sharing of self-created images, videos and arts. Whereas only 15% people use for remixing the contents like songs, images etc. 11% people use blogging just to inform or update the information to the readers on some topic or events.

Liu (2010) studied the use of different social media by the students and their perception towards the social media through an online survey of 221 students. He identify that the most of the students are using 16 media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Wiki, Blogs, Net log etc. this study reveals that out of all respondents 70% are having proper knowledge about Facebook, YouTube and wiki. 25% people were not knowledgably regarding other media tools like Blogs, Net log etc. this study also reveals the reason of using social media by the students. According to the study, 85% students use social media for social engagement, 56% for their communication with friends, 47% use for relationship building. However, only 10% of students mentioned about the use of social media for academic purpose. In supporting to that another study by Browning, et. al. (2011) reveals the perception of the students regarding social media which is very strong and favourable perception for consider social media as the way of deliver course content.

Another study conducted by Poellhuber, et, al. (2011) aimed at to find out the use and interest in social media by the students. He got 3462 respondents through online questionnaire. The result highlights that significant percentage (69%) of users are expert and advanced in using social networking, 52.9% are good in video sharing, 33.7% use for photo sharing and only 25.4% use the blogging tool. The percentage of female students is high in use of social media technology (Poellhuber, et.al (2011) whereas male students have generally more competence and positive attitude towards the use of technology (Jackson et.al, 2001; Miller, et. al, 2000). The study reveals that most of the students between the ages of 18-24 are using social media and having the expertise to use these applications (Poellhuber et.al (2011). As the technology changes and the attitude of students changes the number of student start using social media for academic use are surpassed by its use for other purpose like social engagement, communication and relationship building etc.(Lenhart, et. at.(2010).



From the above literature it has found that the students are start using social media for their academic purpose and Facebook and YouTube are the most used social media application by the students (Guy, 2011; Poellhuber et. al 2011).

### **Use of social media by faculty in higher education**

According to the faculty survey of student engagement (FSSE,2010) the educators have been found to be slow to use social media for academic practice. However the growth of social media usage is increasing worldwide for personal use only. This survey reveals that 80% of faculty out of 4600 faculty members never had use social media. Like Google Docs, Wikis, Blogs or Virtual worlds. Chen & Bryer (2012) studied the perceptions and experiences of 57 faculty members across the United States. This study indicates that the entire faculty are using social media either for personal, research or professional purposes. Majority of the faculty members are using Facebook for personal purpose and Linked In for professional purpose. Furthermore the uses of social media by the faculty member in academics were designed informal and self-regulated to classroom teaching only where participation was an option and the quizzes and tests are absent. This study reveals the issues which prohibiting the use of social media in the higher education are faculty workloads, time constraints, privacy issues, cyber security and cyber bullying.

### **Social media used in distance and traditional education**

Brady et. al (2010) studied the 52 graduates of North Carolina State University to examine their attitude towards the social media in educational practices. One education network was created for the college education to use in distance learning for the students. An online survey was conducted to identify the perception of students regarding the education network site for their education. This survey shows that 70% of the participants say social site is more frequent collaboration as compared to face to face communication. 82% said that the social site was beneficial for communication outside the classroom. 42% said that social networking application allowed them to communicate freely with the faculty 50% of the students said that social networking was more convenient for sharing and discussing ideas and information than the face to face classes.

Manan et, al(2012) explored the experiences of the students in the university of Malaysia regarding the use of Facebook as a medium of sharing information and education. The study shows that majority of the students are enthusiastically accepted that the Facebook is more interesting and enjoyable learning tool. In addition to that the

students are reported that the different approach in the educational process enhanced their understanding of theories and concepts. The increase in the interest of social dimensions of learning has directed the educators and educational institutional to study the integration of social media applications in both conventional and distance learning programmes.

There is an on-going debate regarding the integration of social media in higher education. Some people advocates the benefits of using social media in higher education whereas critics are focusing on the regulation or the removal of social media applications from the classroom teaching. Therefore middle ground has become a challenge for the integration of social media in education.

### **Use of social media in educational practice: pros and cons**

#### **Pros**

The supporters argue that the present day college students are habituated to social media like a convention. Social media allow the students and educators to exchange their ideas, discussions and collaborations. As an educational tool, the social media helps the students and teachers to engage and interact in this social platform (Lederer, 2012;Turkle, 2004) . In supporting to this Lederer, (2012) summarises various benefits of social media in particularly in the education. The scholar outlines that social media allowing students to interact freely with the faculty in a less intimidating environment. So social media becomes more effective way to increase student engagement and helps to develop communication skills. Moreover she believes that social media can help the educators to solve the student's problems even from the home, answer the student's questions, can check the work assignments, share the lesson plans and message the updates in the lessons and also helps to inform the upcoming events, websites and multimedia contents. Finally she points out that college students can use social sites to find employments by register themselves in a professional web presence, can send the resume and able to find out potential employers.

#### **Cons**

Despite of all the benefits of social media discussed in the previous paragraph, the critics argue that there are disadvantages of using social media in the class room or in the educational practice. Besides that the some educators believes that social media applications are not always beneficial or appropriate for the teaching practices (Waycot, et, al, 2010). In support of Lederer (2012) suggest that some time social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) can be cause distraction from the study in the class room which causes disruptive to the learning process. Secondly, she argues that social media discourage face to face communication this leads to the lacking of social skill in students. Lester (2010) cited another



challenges for social media being an educational tool is suitability and appropriateness in the curriculum. For better integration social media should be a part of curriculum and not just a means of communication. Secondly Lester tries to explain the technology infrastructure is also a challenge for social media integration to the education. Third party involvement in the educational practice in terms of web based innovations is major concerns for the educational institutions. Apart from this the cost for develop own social networking site is high for most of the educational institutions.

### Limitation

This study is only focuses on the research articles found out by applying a few keywords in research articles are not based on common lists, it is highly likely that some of the literature was missed. As the area of social media is very vast and here in this paper all the areas are not being discussed for the time factor.

### CONCLUSION

The literature review explain that social media helps for academicians for a lot. The current review shows the diverse perceptions and experiences of students and educators regarding the social media usage in educational practices. Many studies reported that there is huge willingness among the students to introduce social media into their learning process. Apart from this some majority of the faculty were support the inclusion of social media technology in the academics but also provides some guideline and concerns regarding careful integration of social media. The existing published research on the use of social media in academics is limited to the chats, blogs, search and discussions only therefore there is always a need for further explorations in determining that how social media applications can be used for teaching practices. There are ample opportunities for the scholars and educators to continue to study the current issues cited in this article. Perhaps the most debateable question remains that is does the presence of social media in the higher education reflects as an educational tool or does it reflects the changes in the way of students learning process. I believe this could be a proposition for further study that must be an empirical one.

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