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The Efficacy of Employing Social Media for Educational Practice in the Unrest Regions of the World

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ABSTRACT

In this contemporary time of ours, among the common characteristics of war regions of the world, there is lack of education and this adversity is paving more chance for more illiterates in these regions. There exists no physically conducive learning environment in such regions especially where the main targets are schools and other educational centres. In such regions, whenever dangers are foreseen during events like elections, schools must be closed no matter how long it might take. Fortunately, vast majority of students are addicted to social networks though rarely for educational purposes. This paper explored the recent techniques via which social media will be patronized to achieve the best educational practice while restricting students and teachers to their homes during fear. This paper proposes exemplary websites that will distract students from misusing social media and to use it as a true educational tool with a lot of fun.

Keywords: *social media, distance learning, social networking sites, unrest regions, war regions, educational practice*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the use of social media is progressing globally at breathtaking rates. In the first quarter of 2018 Facebook was found to have 1.45 billion daily active users which accounted for 66% of its monthly active users (Statista, 2018a). In first quarter of the year 2018; Twitter reached 327 million monthly active users (Statista, 2018b) and YouTube press mentioned that over 1 billion users access YouTube daily, watching billion hours of video daily- that is approximately one hour for every one on this planet and in every minute hundred hours of video are uploaded to the website (Press - YouTube, 2018). In December 2017 the popular messaging App; Whatsapp, publicized more than 1.5 billion monthly active users, this is an increase from the over 1 billion monthly active users in February 2016 (Statista, 2017). In August 2014, over 600 million persistent users are on WhatsApp, making it the greatest universally admired messaging application (Olson, 2014) and half a billion regular active users are officially declared in January, 2015 (WhatsApp, 2015). The question is, how do these users utilize social media? Hence, identifying the behaviour of individuals on social media sites is an important source of facts for educationalists and researchers. Guy (2012) stated that the internet has been significantly transformed, changing from an information storehouse to advanced social environment in which users are not only static recipient or active gatherers of knowledge, but also authors of content. He also highlighted that, Internet technologies now incorporate the entertaining features of cyber platforms that have appeared as zones for publication, convergence, and community creation and expansion. While Junco et al. (2007) identified that, with all the internet civilization some people by virtue of their fortunate backgrounds, will have clear technological rewards in life over those who are less privileged. In peaceful regions, even with the eminence of social media for peculiar use, still, a little percentage of people use them in the domain of academia (Guy, 2012).

With enormous efforts by few educators, students are highly incorporating social media into their schooling activities. Hence, educators should be looking for ways to engage social media tutoring and make it a doable supplement to the existing learning environment. Specifically, educators should examine the merging of distance learning techniques with instructive social media, as a result, providing modern approaches to coaching and studying that'll blend tutoring and technology with the hope that education should reach the less privileged in unrest regions. In such dimension, Instructors in both peaceful and none peaceful regions should accept this trend of modern social learning, otherwise in the near future with colleges like Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) which began with 1 student and over a decade registered 15 million students globally for free and endorsed by many parents including the Bill Gates of Microsoft, many educators' jobs might be out of work.

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EDUCATION IN THE UNREST REGIONS

Unrest regions of the world are territories that are into adversities of persistent natural and/or unnatural disasters. In the context of this paper, unrest regions are those affected by unnatural disasters such as insurgency, armed conflict and other forms of war. The most significant factors that can severely deteriorate education in any society are situations of conflict (Miguel & Roland, 2011). Poirier (2012) stated that among the common traits of war regions is vulnerability of educational centers to attack from opponents, owing to the fact that any damage on educational system signifies a damage on a state. He also added that there exists also tendency of youth transition into armed militants (child soldiers). According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics, one in five children at the age of schooling are out of school globally. About 263 million children and youth are out of school as of 2016. This includes 63 million at primary school age, 61 million at junior secondary school age and 139 million at senior secondary age (UIS, 2018). Lyndsay (2008) reported that out of the 77 million children globally who are out of school, 40 million live in unrest regions where education is virtually non-existent. Middle East, Africa, some parts of Asia and Europe are among the infamous regions of the world. Academic future in such regions is becoming unclear.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL LEARNING

Chen and Bryer (2012) defined social media as tools that ease social communication, make virtual collaborations possible, and enable discussion between stakeholders. Multimedia (text, photo, audio, and video) sharing tools, networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are among the social media technologies. In this context, social media can either be for general or educational purposes. Social media websites that support education can also be third-party or privately owned. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Pinterest and Skype are common instances of general purpose social media whilst Khan Academy, Edmodo and Ning are commonly used for educational practice (Balasubramanian et al., 2014; Brady et al, 2010; Wankel, 2010; Kayri, 2010; Murphy et al., 2014).

Vygotsky (1978) stated that the theory of social constructivism which commenced in the 1960s is the root to the concept of social learning. He also underlined that social learning is a selected combined problem-solving accomplishment with close surveillance from instructors. Collaboration is the paramount feature of social learning because it is confirmed to be more helpful than individualistic learning (Chen & Bryer, 2012). In the realm of social media versatility, learning is not an interior and personal activity. But, learners collect information by accessing knowledge of others by the means of social media technologies (Junco et al., 2007; Chen & Bryer, 2012; Venkata, 2013). Integrating social learning with social media technologies is based on constructivism theory (Siemens, 2004). Siemens also decided that social learning theories, particularly constructivism, provide understandings on the functions of educators in this socially networked environment. To really implement the system of modern social learning, access to technology is inequitable and Guy (2012) generalized that geographical location and race have gave some students fewer opportunities of learning with social media tools than others. But it is worth noting that, Internet is everywhere (both peaceful and none peaceful regions) and it isn't racist as no person owns the Internet, if you connect you only own a slice of it during your connection period, and as such it does not decide who should communicate.

INCORPORATING SOCIAL MEDIA WITH DISTANCE LEARNING

"Distance Education" or "Distance Learning" is an educational discipline which focuses on teaching strategies and technology with the aim of imparting knowledge, usaually on an individual basis, to learners who are physically absent from the traditional educational environment (Venkata, 2013). Among the major reasons for embracing distance learning as mentioned by Oblinger (2000) are: (a) Institutions' desire for Expanding access to education, (b) Relieving capacity restrictions; institutions can accomadate students morethan their facilities can handle, (c) Capitalizing on emerging market opportunities such as officials seeking advance education and employed adults. Other relevant factors for embracing distance learning are highlighted by Venkata (2013) as follows:

- Special education to students with disabilities, handicaps, or sicknesses: This is for many students that are unable to go to a traditional school environment for they cannot intermingle with others easily or a low immune system and oppressed from other students. Distance learning do help in these instances because learners won't have to leave their household or be around other people. It is a previlege for these students to still learn and to be able to get a good education.

- Education for all irrespective of socioeconomic status: distance learning enables students to acquire good knowledge from various institutions regardless of their gender, age, geographical location, financial status, or cost per student.

In addition, with regard to the students of war regions, distance learning is the securest choice for them and with advent of Social Media and its popularity, distance learning can be enhanced to be the non-erratic and sustainable form of virtual institution for them.

EDUCATIONAL FEASIBILITY OF CERTAIN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The following is a brief highlight on some social networking sites and their educational feasibilities:

FACEBOOK

The following roles can be established using Facebook:

- Historical Page: Educator can create a historical page and pose as a historical figure, by so doing, students will get to appreciate them in an innovative fashion. Share updates, like and interest as if you were the original figure.
- Assignment: Educator can post extra homework for students to attempt at home.
- Classroom updates: Posting pictures to the classroom page will allow parents to follow the whereabouts of their children during field trip and such like events.
- Tracking info delivery: Sometime message delivery to parents or students is uncertain. After any update you might ask for 'likes' to keep track of those that read your post.

TWITTER

With Twitter, educator can:

- Give lesson summaries: Tweet a lesson recap in 140 characters. This repetitive recap can really assist student.
- Access students' level of understanding: Ask students to tweet what they learned that day in class. The top idea retweeted indicate the successful part of the lesson.
- Create a hashtag discussion: Indicate a heading and fix twitter discussion time for the class. Open the dialogue off with a question and encourage students to share ideas with you and with other classmates using based on the heading.

PINTEREST

Educators can use Pinterest to:

- Showcase students' projects and group assignments. This is a fun way of motivating students by showcasing their work to large audience.
- Ask students to pin the future institutions or fields they wish to specialize in, hence building giant alumni and career guidance.

- Conduct Pinterest Exhibitions - group students and assign them to produce a Pinterest board on a specific topic. Once finished, ask them to display their board and the related pins to the class.

YOUTUBE

It allows institutions to:

- Assign students to create videos as a part of their assessments.
- Let students record video of a lecture, upload it to YouTube and use the comments section as a chart forum.
- Allow students to browse lecture videos related to homework questions or questions raised during lectures.
- Showing students, the true examples of both practical and theoretical aspects covered in class and asking them to also contribute by posting video vignettes.

EXEMPLARY SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO SUPPORT DISTANCE LEARNING

Social Networking Sites (SNS) can either be principally developed or adopted from a customized third party social media but there exists a general practice on how to establish SNS. The choice of SNS might be based on popularity or suitability. Klamm (2011) underlined that the best practices for colleges seeking to build effective social media engagement are as follows: (a) Develop a strategy and set goals, (b) Pick and choose your platforms, (c) Empower and support individual departments, (d) Put guidelines in place, (e) Develop a consistent voice across platforms, (f) Communicate across campus.

Numerous third-party websites are in existence to support distance learning. Some of them are examined below:

- Ning (www.ning.com) is an education-based SNS. Brady et al. (2010) explored its educational benefits by experimenting on graduate students.
- Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) is an education-based SNS which provide educational resources for teachers and students and also establish collaboration between

students, teachers and parents. Murphy et al. (2014) identified Khan Academy as a source of practical tools, an involvement, an enhancement activity and accountability tool to keep track of student progress.

- Facebook (www.fb.com) is a general purpose SNS. Kayri (2010) reported a discovery on students' attitude towards educational use of Facebook. Based on the discovery, Kayri suggested that social networks in virtual environments provide continuity in lifelong learning.
- Skype (www.skype.com) is a general purpose SNS popularly known for instance video calls. Skype is in use by educators purposely for distance learning (Budiman, 2013).
- Google+ (plus.google.com) is a secured general purpose SNS. Google+ offers numerous educational potentials (Erkollar & Oberer, 2013).
- YouTube (www.youtube.com) is a general purpose SNS which allow users to upload, watch and share video clips. Roodt & Peier (2013) explained ways of benefitting YouTube in educational practice.
- Edmodo (www.edmodo.com) is an education-based SNS. Edmodo is a complete functional online classroom (Balasubramanian et al., 2014).

EFFECTS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Even with the popularity of social media among students, there is a continuing dispute regarding the role of social media in educational practice. Lederer (2012) underlined that supporters point to: (a) Social media as an educational tool, (b) It enhances students' engagement, (c) Improves communication among students and teachers, (d) Prepares students for successful employment. The foregoing qualities are sufficient to brand social media as the excellent choice for students of war regions. On the other hand, Guy (2012) and Lederer (2012) mentioned that critics cite that: (a) Social media can be a distraction, (b) Discouraging face-to-face communication, (c) Encouraging cyberbullying, (d) Increasing educator and student amount of work, and (e) Technology infrastructure matters are also reasons to detest the notion of social media in education. Out of all the disadvantages, only (c) and (e) are critical and applicable to students of war regions, because the two demerits are relative to students' security and technology requirement especially bandwidth. To prevent cyberbullying, Lederer (2012) suggested that Instructors who employ social media into their course activities should be watchful of potential dangers and immediately intervene on minor incidents before they become more severe. Druart (2013) interviewed educators on the role played by social media in education, one of the challenge they have mentioned is limited technology especially bandwidth. This shows that bandwidth is a common challenge to be addressed while setting distance learning with social media. Alternatively, with lighter SNSs the expected participation will be higher as seen by the Africa's 2go instance messenger (www.2go.im) interactive, which once surpassed facebook in Nigeria mainly for its low bandwidth consumption (Carstens, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The growing desire for providing sustainable education to students of war regions has made it neceassary task on educators to implement distance education. With the extreme usage of social media by students, Educators should follow them and engage them in collaborative teaching wherever they are without stepping into the vulnerable traditional learning environments. This paper suggested that social media holds promise for the academic progress of every student, wherever they may happen to be, and in any situation.

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