Chapter 16
Social Media as a Tool in Higher Education:
A Pedagogical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Development of information technology has very much affected the way teachers teach and students learn. Digital devices have become a routine not only for playing games and communicating with classmates but also for the education and knowledge. This has provided opportunities for enriching the learning environment. The classroom today is a very challenging environment. The reason may be the changing focus of the environment which has shifted from the teachers to the learners. Many educators attempt to adopt new instructional approaches to encourage and motivate students to learn; social media can be one of the best approaches. The objective of this chapter is to understand the importance of social media as new teaching pedagogy in higher education institutes. A framework has been proposed to assimilate specific social media channels in teaching pedagogy in higher education. The framework will be useful in identifying how social media platforms can be integrated into teaching pedagogy for higher educational institutes so that the students may be benefited the most.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been fundamental in the lifecycle of human beings and most importantly in succeeding their existence as parents. After the development of communities, societies and the increased civilization, teaching-learning has become more organized with constant evolutions. In earlier days, people mostly carried out their learning through everyday observation and participation of their particular groups and relatives. Learning used to occur through collaborative processes related to one's cultural beliefs and social circle. Educationists call the processes (earlier named socializing) as informal learning. Educa-

tion is an important factor that leads to employment which is vital to the development of a country and helps in raising the per capita income of the country. Higher education offers an environment, in which a student develops skills and is able to walk on the path for success. Higher education is considered at third level education, which students undergo after completing elementary, middle and high-secondary levels. Methods of imparting and getting knowledge in higher education have undergone extensive changes since ancient times. Due to the emergence of the societal systems, it has evolved into schools, colleges and universities. Teaching has turned into a complicated profession from a simple education profession. Today, it is considered as a very specific job, which involves designing and usage of pedagogical philosophies and practices to offer unique services to fulfill the educational purpose of the people and their social circles. Originally the teaching pedagogies and practices were majorly based on unplanned observations, which have evolved into organised observations. This was followed by generalization of experiences. However, technology has always been an important ingredient for education.

If a major breakthrough is considered in educational pedagogy, Chalk-board changed the way teachers communicated in the classroom. The initiation of record players, radio, television and finally computers, gave rise to distance education, which largely enhanced the student access to education. Digital technology supports new teaching pedagogies and learning approaches, which offers high involvement of students, reduce the operational costs and support in retaining the school and university brands and reputations. For instance, technology provides an opportunity to connect with the national or international experts or even lecturers with new schools and universities. This might help in adding the number of courses offered and in turn attracting more students. Due to availability of video-recorded lectures and online access to course materials, a student can connect ubiquitously via any device. This provides greater collaboration between teachers and students and allows them to strengthen their connections with the communities in their respective fields. With this increased availability to students, a teacher is also more empowered to deliver more innovative, exciting lectures along with more personalized feedback and mentoring processes. The emergence of e-learning in the last two decades, has brought immense changes in the field of education. This has further led to an important role of social media in education.

Moghavvemi et al. (2017) defined social media as a wide range of applications that allow users to create, share, comment, and discuss any digital content. It is regarded as 'dynamic', 'interactive', 'democratic', 'people centric', 'volatile', 'social', and 'adaptive' (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Social media has emerged as a powerful medium of communication across the globe and its extensive use has changed the way, people communicate and interact online. Social media channels include the social networking sites, blogs, vlogs, instant messaging, and virtual communities. Beyond the boundaries of personal communication, social media is also redefining the ways in which organizations are reaching their audiences and communicating with the individuals (Hendricks & Schill, 2015). It has a capacity to convert teaching and learning into a more open and collaborated work. This may be due to the fact that social media is now the key mode of interaction among young generation which is the main audience for higher education institutions. According to 2017 statistics, the average time spent by millennial users (people born after 1980) worldwide on mobile internet is 223 minutes per day, which has actually got doubled from 2012 to2017 (Statista, 2017). This proves a strong dependence of young people on the internet as part of their daily life. Higher Education Institutes across the world have started using social media to reach out to the prospective students as well as to interact with current students and alumni. Technology not only makes iteasy to obtain information, but also allows people to interact through cyberspace (Kusumawati et al., 2014). Nayar and Kumar (2018) have argued that Information and Communication Technology (ICT)removes the big constraints of time and space in higher education and enables access

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