The role of Social Media in Teaching and Learning

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• Pros and cons of social media in the classroom
• Examples of use of Social Media in the classroom
• Classroom Life – The Global Social Network for learners
Pros and cons of social media in the classroom

There is a continuous debate about the role social media should play in education. Supporters point out the benefits that social media provides for today's digital learners while experts call for control and for eliminating social media from classes. Finding a middle ground has become a challenge.

As an academic device, social media improves the chance to learn by enabling learners and instructors to link and communicate in new, interesting ways. Web websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn provide a place where users can dialogue, exchange ideas, and find solutions to problems. These websites are designed to promote cooperation and conversation.

Despite these benefits, experts claim that there are serious threats to using social media in the academic setting. What are these risks and do they over-shadow the potential for opportunity?
Pros of using social media in the classroom

**Educational Tool**  Today’s students arrive at school, fluent in Web and social networking technologies. Teachers can make use of this knowledge to enhance opportunities to learn. With social media, teachers can promote cooperation and discussion, create meaningful conversation, exchange ideas, and boost student interaction.

**Enhance Student Engagement**  Social media is an effective way to increase student involvement and build better interaction skills. Learners who hardly ever raise a hand in class may feel more comfortable on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube. Social media systems enable instructors to identify “back channels” that promote conversation and surface ideas that students are too shy or nervous to speak out in class.
Pros of using social media in the classroom

Improve Communication Among Students and Teachers
Facebook and Twitter can improve interaction among learners and teachers. Teachers can respond to students’ questions via a Facebook page or Twitter feed, post homework assignments and lesson plans, send messages and updates, schedule or announce upcoming events, and share interesting Web sites and multimedia content. Students can use Twitter to get help from teachers or other students. A great way for teachers to give participation points in addition to in class participation is by having students tweet about something that was discussed in class.

Preparing Students for Successful Employment
Students entering the workforce can use social networking sites to network and find employment. With LinkedIn, older students can establish a professional web presence, post a resume, research a target company or school, and connect with other job seekers and employers. Career centres and alumni associations are using Twitter to broadcast job openings and internships. Students should follow businesses or professional organizations on Facebook and Twitter to stay updated on new opportunities and important developments in their field.
Cons of using social media in the classroom

• **Social Media can be a Distraction**
  A common issue among teachers is that social media is distracting in the classroom. These teachers maintain that resources like Facebook and Twitter divert students' attention away from what's happening in class and can disrupt the learning process. With the possibility that the use of social media tools can be an invitation for students to play truant, teachers should make sure they won't be abused.

• **Cyberbullying**
  While social networking sites provide a way for students and teachers to link up, they can be a tool for harmful behavior - even at school. Teachers who use social media as part of their teaching should be wary of possible risks and plan to intervene on minor incidents before they become more serious.
Cons of using social media in the classroom

Discouraging Face-to-Face Communication

Some educators are worried that while real-time digital stream may create a safe situation for students who are uncomfortable expressing themselves, learners are missing valuable lessons in real-life social skills. Students may find themselves at a disadvantage during university admission or job interviews when they need to command attention and deliver a coherent message. At public events and in personal relationships, they need to be able to effectively express themselves and connect with others.

Ultimately, while the debate continues over what role social media should play in the classroom, no one can argue the influence that social networking has on today's students. This tech-savvy generation conducts much of their life through social media channels. Not surprisingly, they're already using YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter as tools for learning and collaboration. They expect that their education will follow suit. With this in mind, it seems prudent for today's institutions to get on the social media train and find ways to successfully integrate these tools into the classroom.
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October 2, 2012 in Maths

by David

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