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FOCUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Is Social Media Too Social for Class?
A Case Study of Twitter Use

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(Editor's note: See full text for reference citations.)

Twitter™, the 140 character or less micro-blogging application, has received popular attention in the mass media for its entertainment value, but it remains a novelty for many. Users can post and read short messages of text and picture through Twitter's website interface or various other applications. According to a 2012 report by Pew Internet & American Life Project, only fifteen percent of online adults studied subscribed to Twitter with eight percent using it daily; 54 percent of users access the service through their mobile phones. While numerous articles and conference papers propose interesting possibilities for and contain anecdotes about Twitter use in classrooms and online learning, its potential remains uncertain with limited empirical evidence to support the claims.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to formally study the uses of Twitter when used as a supplement to online and face-to-face (F2F) classroom learning among undergraduate and graduate students in a college of education. What can you really say in 140 characters or less? Can Twitter be an effective teaching and learning tool? What are technical issues that arise when tweets are introduced into university courses?

This article is excerpted from *TechTrends* (57) 2: 39-45, March/April 2013. Read the full text by logging in at the AECT website, http://aect.org/, clicking on Publications.

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RESEARCH

The topic this month revolves around the question: What is learning?

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It's not too early to begin planning to attend this year's convention in Anaheim, California, on the theme: "Innovate! Integrate! Communicate!"

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iTECH DIGEST

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Call for Papers. The AECT flagship practitioner journal, *TechTrends*, is seeking manuscript submissions, including from international and newer authors. For more information, see the Instructions for Authors online: http://aecttechtrends.com. Likewise AECT's premier research journal, *Educational Technology Research and Development* also welcomes submissions: http://www.editorialmanager.com/etrd.

Call to Converse. Did you know that you can participate in an online discussion forum through the AECT website? The current topic is "Barriers to a National Certification Standard." Join in and read what others are saying and then contribute your own thoughts in the Forums section linked from the AECT homepage: http://aect.org/.

Call for Manuscripts. AECT, in collaboration with Springer, has announced a new series of books and monographs under the title, "Educational Communications and Technology: Issues and Innovations." Series editors are J. Michael Spector (University of North Texas), M.J. Bishop (Lehigh University), and Dirk Ifenthaler (Open University Australia). The editors will serve as peer reviewers and may enlist additional reviewers.

The purpose of the series is to extend AECT's ongoing publications with Springer and to offer the Springer Briefs innovative format to AECT authors and contributors. For more information potential authors are asked to see: http://www.springer.com/authors/book+authors/springerbriefs?SGWID=0-1720013-0-0-0.

Social Media Networks in the Workplace

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We live in what has been dubbed the social era. Just as the industrial revolution enabled us to view work in new ways, the social media revolution allows us to change how we interact to accomplish workplace goals.... David Kolb's experiential learning theory posits that knowledge is gained in cycles. These cycles involve concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. As each cycle is completed, the learner's knowledge continuously builds upon itself. Social media can be leveraged to shorten this knowledge cycle.

Social media networks can be beneficial to organizations because of the open communication they foster. As they are implemented, some specific factors must be taken into account. These factors include trust, knowledge identification, implementation strategies, learner characteristics, platform specifications, and security.

In summary, Chomick cites an article produced in *McKinsey Quarterly* by leading management consultancy firm McKinsey & Company, Eric Lui, Andy Miller, and Roger P. Roberts that identified six factors for successful adoption of Web 2.0 technology in large organizations:

- bottom-up "grassroots" use of the technology (with "champions" of the technology at the top of the organizational hierarchy)
- acceptance of natural use in these technologies (that is, letting users define what works and what doesn't)
- these tools must be in the business workflow; participation must be made mandatory so as to reduce duplicating work
- appeal to the participants needs; reward and recognize contributors for their content
- target heavy users for pushing the technology; certain users need to serve as
- motivation for others to participate
- balance risk and freedom; organizations need to find a balance between risk management over the content posted and the ability for users to post without fear of reprisal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have seen that social media network implementation in an organization can create new opportunities for learning and employee engagement. Although this type of endeavor can be risky, the rewards (knowledge sharing, learning, productivity, etc.) have the potential to outweigh the risks, and the cost of ignoring this valuable tool could be significant.

Twitter...continued from page 1

What do students say about using Twitter for course communication?

Using the content of student tweets and self-reports, the study provides evidence on student perceptions and use that can be helpful to those considering Twitter in higher education classes.

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In fall 2010, students in three university classes, two sections of "Computers in Education" (CE) and one in "Mobile Learning" (ML), volunteered to participate in a "Twitter Fun" extra credit assignment….

For the study, students were asked to create a Twitter account, follow each other on Twitter, follow class hashtags, and tweet at least 75 tweets during the semester. In addition, students filled out three progress reports asking questions from basic Twitter knowledge to their perceived Twitter educational value. As an extra credit assignment in a technology-rich class, the instructor intentionally did not provide any instruction about Twitter, such as how to create an account, how to follow tweets, or what is a hashtag. The instructor tweeted heavily throughout the semester to the three classes using the hashtags with class-related news, information, and announcements.

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While Twitter has been often recommended as a means to increase collaboration and inter-connection among students, this study suggests that, when given options about use, students who use Twitter tend be most interested in it for information sharing, both in terms of resources related to the course and for commenting on their personal and immediate status. Few tweets were answered even when requests were made for response, and the content of tweets showed only two students engaging in a conversation; personal interaction was not sustained and some requests for comments went unanswered. Collaboration did not occur when the usage was left to the students.

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We question the notion that instructors should use popular social media to connect with students. Such recommendations are based on the idea of using social media such as Facebook and Twitter because that is where the students are and, therefore, faculty should communicate with students in the ways they prefer. However, social media uses for class do not fully parallel the ways students or faculty use social media in their personal lives. Further, even in this small qualitative study, the emphasis on social, non-course related content of many tweets often buried tweets with information and interaction more directly related to the course.

CONFERENCE NEWS

AECT – ICFER 2013 Heads To Taiwan, June 18 - 20

In response to requests from AECT international affiliates and members, the AECT International Conference on the Frontier of e-Learning Research 2013 (AECT-ICFER 2013) will be held at the National Museum of Natural Science (shown above) in Taichung, Taiwan, from June 18 to 20, 2013.

AECT-ICFER 2013 will feature four interrelated tracks: 1) Digital Classrooms: From Dream-based Research to Practice-based Research; 2) Insights from Distinguished Mobile and Ubiquitous Learning Projects Across the World; 3) Transforming the Classrooms: Innovative Digital Game-based Learning Designs and Applications; and 4) Neuroscience Perspectives for Science Learning in Technology-Enhanced Learning Environments.

More Conferences

International Council for Educational Media will gather on the theme, "we-Learning: Content, Community, and Collaboration," in Singapore, October 1-4, 2013.

AECT International Convention will take place in Anaheim, California, October 29-November 2, 2013, on the theme, "Innovate! Integrate! Communicate!"

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What Is Learning?

Instructional design, learning design, learning architecture—all proceed from a premise, usually in answer to the question, What is learning?

Learning theories tend to be aggregated under three broad headings:

- *behaviorism*, which is based on observable changes in behavior, often expressed in patterns;
- *cognitivism,* which is based in the thought processes behind behavior, using observed behaviors to understand what is going on in the learner's mind; and
- *constructivism,* which is grounded by the idea that learners construct understandings based on perceptions and individual experiences.

Behaviorism has long roots, going back to Aristotle, although most students of learning theory are more likely to point to Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849 – 1936), known for his work in stimulus-response conditioning.

For more information on behaviorism, readers may want to visit the website of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) at http://www.abainternational.org. Of particular interest may be an article in the group's newsletter, titled "What Happened to Behaviorism?" (2006, vol. 29, no. 6), by Roddy Roediger. The article is a reprint, having appeared in *Observer,* a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, in 2004.

A certain frustration with behaviorism is given as impetus for interest in cognitivism at mid-20th century. Although this learning theory has roots in the Ancient Greeks as well and can be traced to the 1920s in its modern form, the "cognitive revolution" took off in the 1960s, largely because of Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980). There is, in fact, a Jean Piaget Society, online at http://www.piaget.org. The society's quarterly journal is titled *Cognitive Development.*

Piaget is among a group of scholars who are given credit for the emergence of constructivism as a learning theory. Another prominent historical figure is American philosopher and psychologist John Dewey (1859 – 1952). The term *constructivism,* however, did not figure prominently in the literature of learning theory until the 1990s.

Readers may be interested in learning more about the Association for Constructivist Teaching at https://sites.google.com/site/assocfor constructteaching/. The association publishes an e-journal titled *The Constructivist* and maintains a blog at http://constructivistblog .wordpress.com.

What is learning usually is answered by focusing on the mind in these predominant theories and many other, lesser known theories. In recent years an emerging field has been "mind, brain, and education," or MBE, which explores interactions between biological processes (brain) and learning (mind). Also referred to as educational neuroscience, MBE has garnered as many critics as supporters since its emergence in the 1990s.

Readers may want to examine the International Mind, Brain, and Education Society website at http://www.imbes.org. The society also publishes a quarterly journal titled *Mind, Brain, and Education.*

Lest readers conclude that the question, What is learning?, is merely one to be debated by education philosophers and pedagogy specialists, it can be informative to explore some of the broader permutations of theory into practice. For example, the Society for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image (SCSMI), online at http://scsmi-online.org, is an interdisciplinary organization made up of scholars interested in "cognitive, philosophical, aesthetic, neurophysiological, and evolutionary-psychological approaches to the analysis of film and other moving-image media."