

# Social Networking as a Tool for Modern Pedagogy: E-Learning and Distance Education

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**Abstract:** *This paper presents the review of application of social media in making the e-learning and distance education more interactive and result oriented with the advent of Web 2.0 tools. With the integration of social media and first generation e-learning tools, interaction among the members has increased many folds which has resulted in increased assimilation of knowledge through interactive discussion. Yet the importance of traditional system of education remains intact as evidenced by present study indicated by high values of standard deviation against questions whether social media based education is better or traditional one. It is a fact that social media gives an opportunity to all to pose questions, that is even shy students can pose the question to a tutor, a low deviation 0.504007 was obtained to corroborate the fact.*

**Keywords:** *Social media, e-learning, distance education, web 2.0 tools.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. are gaining momentum among people who would like to stay connected with one another. These sites allow individuals to build communities. In these communities, individuals meet each other, make friends, share information, interests, and activities.

Social networking is included as a part of social media. Social media is user-generated Web content that is shared by social interaction. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Examples of social media are: Blogging (i.e., Wordpress, Edublogs, Blogpot); Building three-dimensional content in virtual worlds (i.e., Second Life); Micro-blogging (i.e., Twitter); Private social networking (i.e., Ning); Public social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn); Sharing of images (i.e., Flickr); Sharing of presentations (i.e., Slideshare); Sharing of videos (i.e., YouTube); Social bookmarking and tagging (i.e., Delicious, Diigo); Social news sites (i.e., Digg); Voice, chat, & video conferencing (i.e., Skype); and Wikis (i.e., Wikipedia, GoogleWave).

E-learning is defined as "the delivery of education (all activities relevant to instructing, teaching, and learning) through various electronic media." (Koochang & Harman, 2005) E-learning or distance education is progressively being adopted among students in higher education institutions.

Some academics insist that the only way students can learn is via a traditional, face-to-face classroom. This might be justifiable if studies demonstrated that traditional learning was superior to online learning. The evidence, however, does not support this view. Means *et al.* (2009) did a meta-analysis of more than 1,000 studies published from 1996 to 2008 comparing online with traditional classroom teaching. What they found was that online learning does offer many advantages over traditional classroom learning. In fact, students who take courses that are either completely or partially online will perform better than students taking traditional, face-to-face courses. Interestingly, hybrid courses that combine classroom learning with online learning seem to be the best of all delivery methods. Means *et al.* (2009) conclude:

Despite what appears to be strong support for online learning applications, the studies in this meta-analysis do not demonstrate that online learning is superior as a *medium*. In many of the studies showing an advantage for online learning, *the online and classroom conditions differed in terms of time spent, curriculum and pedagogy*. It was the *combination* of elements in the treatment conditions (which was likely to have included additional learning time and materials as well as additional opportunities for collaboration) that produced the observed learning advantages. At the same time, one should note that online learning is much more conducive to the expansion of learning time than is face-to-face instruction.

Educators today are trying to determine the goals of education. The Internet has changed the rules, and skills that were important in the past may not be so important today. For example, is the ability to calculate a standard deviation or square root important in the computer era? Some of the goals of education are providing students with the following abilities

and skills: problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration (ability to work with others), navigating the Internet and finding accurate and useful information, and making ethical judgments. An overarching goal is to provide students with a passion for learning. In the Internet Age, knowledge acquired in the freshman year in college may be obsolete by the senior year (Friedman and Friedman, 2011).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study involves the analysis of utilization of famous social networking by a group of 30 engineering students of different Universities Jammu & Kashmir for interaction and discussions on the various academic subjects among the members of online communities. The survey was not limited to a particular branch of engineering but involved different streams.

Likert's Five Point Scale is employed as a statistical tool. Literature from various research papers is used as primary data. The secondary data is accumulated from online questionnaires. A total of 10 questions were designed to obtain the mean and standard deviation. The questionnaires were designed according to Lickert scale with five options:



Questions:

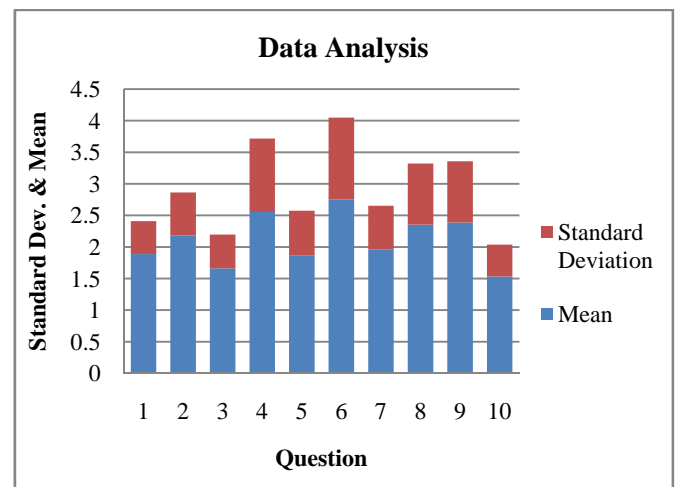
1. Social media community discussions ensure better understanding among participants.
  2. Convergence of a problem takes less time in a social media assisted discussion as compared to traditional classes.
  3. Social media based discussion increases the attention level among students.
  4. Social media based distance education is far better than traditional distance education system.
  5. Social media based e-learning is flexible.
  6. Social media based education enables the tutor To know the caliber of students in a better way.
  7. Evaluation is faster as compared to traditional System.
  8. Evaluation is accurate.
  9. Doubt clearing is easy.
  10. Even shy students pose questions in online System.
- MS Excel is used to evaluate the data to get the results from it.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Raw data was obtained from the students randomly and was analyzed to arrive at mean and standard deviation. Following table gives the data in usable form:

**Table 1: Mean & Standard Deviation**

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	1.887769	0.520830
2	2.183191	0.678911
3	1.662419	0.534983
4	2.553633	1.162637
5	1.861676	0.711967
6	2.751523	1.297212
7	1.957897	0.694808
8	2.353822	0.968468
9	2.386175	0.971431
10	1.532387	0.504007



**Fig. 1: Standard deviation and Mean**

1. It has been observed that least standard deviation was observed for question number 10 as 0.504007 which implies that it is a fact that social media gives an opportunity to all to pose questions, that is even shy students can pose the question to tutor. Traditional classrooms hinder the shy students to pose questions although a tactical tutor may incite them to do so.
2. Question numbers 4 and 6 have got very high Standard deviations 1.162637 and 1.297212 respectively, meaning that people don't agree that social media can be accepted as a sole agent of education system although it has got numerous benefits and it is not possible to measure the caliber of participants of online community.
3. Question numbers 1 and 3 with standard deviation of 0.520830 and 0.534983 respectively show that people agree that social media ensures better understanding among participants and it increases the attention level and interest among the students. Use of graphical interfaces, pictures, audio and videos has always increased the interest level among the candidates, which in turn is responsible for ensuring better understanding as compared to traditional classroom culture.

4. Question numbers 8 and 9 with standard deviation of 0.968468 and 0.971431 respectively indicate people don't agree that evaluation is accurate and doubt clearing is easy. Frequent question asking in traditional system with local references and use of native languages help more in doubt clearing.
5. Question numbers 2,5 and 7 with standard deviation of 0.678911,0.711967 and 0.694808 respectively meaning people are of mixed opinion about Convergence of a problem taking less time in a social media assisted discussion as compared to traditional classes, about social media being flexible and evaluation being faster.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Since students nowadays are digital natives who are accustomed to learn in an active learning environment, interactive and collaborative e-learning environment beyond traditional educational systems. Under this circumstance, learning is a combination of cognitive and constructive process with social process. Social media involves shared wider participation in the creation of information, encourage more active learning, and supports better group interaction. Therefore, we combine the advantages of traditional educational system and social media to build an interactive and collaborative e-learning platform. The platform not only helps users to build their personalized social network and knowledge network during the process of learning, but also connects course network of users with his/her social network and knowledge network. It also provides news feed service,

recommendation service, and search service to facilitate interaction and collaboration bet

ween users. Traditional classes and social media both have got their importance however social media classes can't replace traditional classes completely. Social media classes are working as an enhancement tool for pedagogy. It is because of traditional classes only that we have been able to develop the modern multimedia tools and the allied technology.

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