

Foreword

The book “Social Media and the New Academic Environment: Pedagogical Challenges” is devoted to those really dramatic changes in educational environment, which are caused by the phenomenon of social media. We are all witnesses of the increasing impact of social media upon our studying the surrounding world and, of course and especially – on higher education. It is fully understood that teachers and educational researchers cannot overlook the great popularity of social web technologies, and their increasing professional interest is fully justified. No doubt, many interesting papers on this topic have been submitted to the IGI Global.

Collecting the high quality papers in one book (this book) provides a considerable value for our readers. Firstly, these papers together present a good state-of-the-art picture of the current research on social media affecting academic environment. Secondly, the papers present different points of view on the future development of the educational environment under “pressure” of social media.

The set of papers included in this book is exactly as diverse as we would like the introduction to this research direction to manifest. But of course, the most important and prospective is the fact that the popular social technologies currently explored in some educational environments - such as blogs, wikis, and social tagging - are addressed by more than one paper in this book.

Today it is the time to recognize that Information Technology (IT) is more a social phenomenon rather than a technological one. This recognition appears to be significant for people’s everyday social life, and of course for education in particular.

Obviously, education as the most sensitive and updatable sphere of human life requires deep studies of the new phenomenon of integration of social media into it. Due to the rapid development in the field of social media, such studies require wide vision and high qualification of researchers.

The book you read is the one, which demonstrates both the wide vision and the high qualification of the authors. It comprises a variety of points of view on the problem, it gives analysis of the present condition of social media in formal and informal education, and it foresees future tendencies and includes some real cases.

In a nutshell, the research works presented in the book can be briefly divided into two types: (a) integration of social media into the existing academic environment; (b) moving to a new social academic environment which would be originally integrated with social media.

Researches of both of the types are very important for teachers and scientists from the theoretical and practical points of view.

More specifically, the book comprises works distributed in four sections.

Issues concerning the new social pedagogy are covered by a group of four papers under the title “Pedagogical Challenges of Social Media in Academia”. These papers deal with: (a) collaboration between faculty and students on the basis of Facebook; (b) mobile learning for vocational education; (c) social design and (d) “learning-2.0” in high school.

The section “Social Media as a Means for Current Education” is devoted to the papers that deal with integration of the social media into the recent (existing) educational environment. They study actual problems we feel today in the educational field, for example: impact of social media on the development of communities, changes in corporate social responsibility focused on informal education when moving to the Web 2.0, adaptation of social media based courses to the constant changes in industry.

A number of case studies of integration and using the social media in educational institutes are presented in section “National Practices of Social Media in Higher Education”. They show examples and results of educational use of social media in different countries: Romania, Spain, Portugal, Malaysia, Ukraine, USA, and Singapore – countries with different educational systems and cultural traditions. The case studies are no doubt of a great interest for practitioners and scientists in the educational field.

A new academic social educational environment that is replacing the traditional learning environment is the focus of the section entitled “The Impact of Social Media Technologies on the Academic Environment”. The papers from this section mostly speak about social media technologies such as: educational blogging, intensive data communication and Augmented Reality. I would like to emphasize however, that there might be many other possibilities, which may be seen as combinations or developments of the described ones.

The above notes a number of reasons to read the presented material, since it has everything to inspire specialists. And I am sure, some new surprising aspects and versions of the modern educational environments are expected to appear after the presented book becomes familiar to the practitioners and scientists in the field.

Further, it is my opinion that the publishing of this book is a significant step in presenting the subject “social media in education” as a serious academic discipline, which requires intensive study in the coming years.

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