Chapter 2
Social Media: Changing the Way We Teach and Changing the Way We Learn

Arleen Cuevas
NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Fritz Kohle
NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT
Social media has become ubiquitous in the daily personal lives of students and teachers alike. But the question remains if social media should be integrated effectively in higher education or if it should be left out in the realm outside the classroom. This paper explores how students use social media in school, whether or not they find social media useful in the learning process and provides further discussion on the importance of adopting a social media strategy in the education sector. The authors facilitated a study in 2010 and a follow-up survey in 2011 to students taking the course International Media and Entertainment Management at NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands to assess how students are using social media in a learning environment. The study reveals a need for social media to be used as a learning tool in order to promote active participation through content creation and encourage a virtual space for dynamic dialogue which in turn helps link formal and informal learning connecting students, teachers, and colleagues around the world. But more complex issues such as privacy, copyright, policing and governance of social media needs to be addressed.

1 INTRODUCTION
This study explores how students use social media at school, whether or not they find social media useful and discusses the need in creating an appropriate response to social media for the educational sector. Over a short period of the time, social media has become ubiquitous and the question remains if educators should adapt or ignore its use in the sphere of the learning environment. According to Zhang

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and Yang (Yang, X. & Zhang S. 2010) use of social media is exponentially growing and there is a real need for teachers and students to understand and engage with social media in the educational sector.

For the purpose of this study we define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user generated content”. (Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. 2010) The most popular types of social media include social networks such as Facebook and Myspace, file sharing sites such as Youtube, Vimeo and Flicker, blogging sites such as Blogger and Tumblr and also microblogging sites such as Twitter.

In our previous paper (Cuevas, A. & Kohle, F. 2010), we found out that majority of students are already well-adept with the use of social media sites. Almost all respondents had an active account in at least one type of social media, such as Facebook, Youtube or Twitter and they log into their accounts at least one time a week. Students in general had a positive experience with the integration of these social media in producing the multimedia projects in the course, although there were still students who would rather use email instead of making face to face contact with regards to asking questions or being more critical to peer assessments.

According to Siemens and Weller (Siemens, G. & Weller, M. 2011), the main benefits of social media for students is that it encourages interactive participation through peer to peer dialogue, promotes sharing of resources through content creation and provides a virtual space for collaboration and instant communication. Social media also enables students to build up “social capital” wherein resources coming from relationships and closed communities are enriched (Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. 2007).

But with these benefits, there are also challenges that come along with it. There is a need for training for faculty to use it and provide the same set of standard criteria across all courses. Instances such as students knowing more about social media and how it works should be avoided.

Many schools also do not have or are in the process of developing and implementing appropriate guidelines with regards to social media applications. The lack of guidelines in many universities often results in a fragmented faculty body – some engaging in social media and others ignoring it. Situations such as students uploading copyrighted university material or photos and videos of teachers behaving badly can be avoided with application of rules for the use of social media. The lack of these regulations can also potentially result in negative publicity for the educational institution as well as the student.

There are a variety of topics to be discussed such as: how to structure and deconstruct learning spaces, applying content control between the educator and the student, blending of informal and formal learning and how to address the issue of privacy and copyright in social media (Siemens, G. & Weller, M. 2011).

2 RELATED LITERATURE

The social constructivism theory is based on how socialization and interaction with other people can help students learn and construct their own knowledge and personal learning processes (Lin, Q. 2011). Social media can then be seen as a set of constructivist tools that can facilitate participative learning models that is being introduced in higher education today. (Espuny, C., Gonzalez, J., Lleixa M. & Gisbert, M. 2011)

There has been a lot of discussion about the perceived advantages and disadvantages of using social media in the education sector. According to Weller and Dalziel (Weller, M.J. & Dalziel, J. 2007), social media clashes with the education system because the education sector depends on the hierarchichal struc-
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