Chapter 7

Microblogging Case Study in Higher Education: Edmodo in Finland

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ABSTRACT

Recent research indicates that even though social media networking sites are commonly used in higher education, very little empirical evidence is available concerning the impact of social media use on student learning and engagement. In this chapter, the experience of using Edmodo is analysed as learning aid to support group work in comparison with the level of familiarity, engagement, and frequency of use of social media technologies among university-level computer science students in Finland. The specific focus of the chapter is to examine the reception of the students towards the Edmodo platform. The data was collected through a social media familiarity questionnaire, Edmodo experience questionnaire, and interviews. The main findings are that the cohort was not very familiar with social media at the beginning of the course. This chapter provides experimental evidence that microblogging social networking sites and, more specifically, Edmodo can be used as an educational tool to help engage students more in the use of social media networking sites.

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The academic world has been experiencing a rapid growth in educational technology and more specifically social media tools, which have the potential to constructively complement traditional education and even replace it in the cases of distance/online learning. Social media tools are used in many institutions for educational purposes in numerous, innovative ways (Conole & Alevizou, 2010; Doyle, Sammon, & Neville, 2016; Paliktzoglou, Giousmpasoglou, & Marinakou, 2016; Oyelere, Paliktzoglou, & Suhonen, 2016) even to the extent of such tools being utilized in traditional face-to-face classrooms (Redecke, Ala-Mutka, Bacigalupo, Ferrari, & Punie, 2009; Bower, Hedberg, & Kuswara, 2010). Of particular note is that the revised Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) has been extended to include relevant terminology describing the learning process through the use of social media tools (Churches, 2007). This inclusion indicates the adoption of such tools in modern education. From the very beginning of the internet, educators introduced communicating with others through interfaces such as chat rooms, Internet forums, message boards, web communities and blogs (Albion, 2008).

Similar to other communication tools, social media tools have rules, conventions and practices which users have to adhere to in order to be accepted as legitimate participants in these online communities. As argued by Jacobs (2008) social media tools also have some potential pitfalls to negotiate, such as the unintended consequences of publicly posting sensitive personal information, confusion over privacy settings and contact with people one may not know.

According to Safran, Guetl, and Helic (2007) social media tools are part of a wider online phenomena, also in the field of education and learning, which enables self-expression, communication and more versatile user interaction online. Additionally Chatti, Jarke and Frosch-Wilke (2007) propose that in the era of culture centralized collaboration, one-size-fits-all, top-down, static and knowledge push models of traditional learning initiatives need to be changed to a more open, dynamic, emergent, social, personalized and knowledge pull model for learning. In recent research it has been argued that social media concepts open new windows for more efficient learning and have the potential to overcome many of the drawbacks of traditional learning models (Chatti et al., 2007; Maloney, 2007).

The motivation for this study stems from the researchers’ opinion that there is a lack of empirical studies on the specific use of Edmodo (a microblogging social networking site) as an instructional tool, particularly in higher education. In this research, the use of microblogging is based on an adoption of social media driven learning frameworks by Chatti et al. (2007), which stresses the use of knowledge networking and community building to leverage, sustain and share knowledge in a collaborative way. Echoing Chatti’s assertion, this research similarly places emphasis
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