**ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN E-LEARNING**

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**Abstract**

E-learning is defined as the distribution of new technologies and applications to support learners and the process of learning. The process of teaching has been changed drastically in the past few years, with the advancements in technology and the traditional methods of teaching has been replaced by modern teaching methods. Social media platforms include software, digital videos, images, web pages, databases, digital audio and E books which can be created, viewed, modified, communicated, preserved on digital electronics devise as per the requirement of the user. Internet social networks in the last years has risen as one of the most powerful tools where people exchange knowledge and multimedia content which can be shared between groups of people with common features. There is always an inherent social network in any e-learning system, where the main players are the teachers, learners and learning resources. After the pandemic it has now become more difficult for every one of us to imagine learning without internet and social networks as they provide us with the vast knowledge. However, in the entrepreneurial education sector the role of social media is recognizable. The set of technologies that are used in e-learning align well with the argument that students must take full responsibility for their learning by engaging their teachers and other students. Information technology provides the applicable tools to enhance virtual interactions between teachers and learners. This paper focus on the emerging trends of e-learning via social media platforms and different IT media used for learning.

**Keywords** – Social Media, E-learning, IT Tools.

**Introduction**

Information technology (IT) is changing the ways in which firms and individuals interact and exchange information (Benitez and Walczuch, 2012; Amrit et al., 2015; Ngai et al., 2015; Soto et al., 2016). This change may explain us why the estimated global IT investment have now reached to 3.5 trillion dollars in 2017 (Gartner, 2016). The mode of teaching and interacting with students has with the expansion of Internet and its services also changed (Brower, 2003). In a digital environment, educational institutions and scholars should seek what IT resources should be used. And how to take advantage from them to improve student learning and satisfaction process.

The potency of e-learning in attaining the aim of learning and its outcomes solely depends on the incorporation of customized IT products in strategies of enhancing the distribution of the information through platforms such as university e-learning blackboards. Through IT, learning organizations are now developing systems for information management, applications of object-oriented learning, and the recreation of virtual classrooms for better e-learning experience.

When one distinguishes between two types of IT resources for potential use in education: one can see the traditional education technologies and social media applications. Traditional education techniques are more customarily used, are less interactive and most important they are course-specific platforms (e.g., Moodle based teaching platform, email, instructor’s website). Social media applications usually refer to the external social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which are very interactive and are popular among students, being more specific, Facebook and Instagram have connected people closer than ever. The popularity of different social media platforms helps learners interact with instructors better. It allows learners to discuss content about the course, share ideas, and create peer groups to do activities.

E-learning professionals mostly rely upon the social media platforms to share their course materials, delivering learning practices and for communicating with the learners. Besides this, social media platforms are one of the best sources that can help learners to interact with instructors to frequently ask questions and clear doubts. IT resources can also be used to improvise the traditional methods of learning (i.e., face-to-face) lectures. Traditional education technologies enable the students to connect with the course any time any place as per their convenience (e.g., Moodle-based teaching platforms). The main aim of IT resources in education is to facilitate communication and exchange of material among instructor and students. Social media applications also affect the teaching activities. Some scholars highlight the negative influence of social media on teaching activities. Many students dislike privacy invasion and are unwilling to share their ideas with instructors over social media applications (Gonzalez et al., 2015). Social media applications can also be time consuming and may contain diversions through advertisements, warnings, suggestions, or games, which could cause attention deficit, which can affect the student’s academic performance (Gonzalez et al., 2016). These distractions may be problematic if social media applications are used in classes.

**Why is it important to use Social media?**

As we say, modern-day problems have got modern solutions for learners to excel better. It helps learners to consume information online and improves familiarity with the subject. Therefore, incorporating social media in teaching and learning processes is definitely a game-changer. The positive impact on the learners is the access to video lectures, and quizzes, and participation in group discussions. By doing it, learners will be able to stay interested in the subject. They will also get the flexibility of learning from anywhere at any time in need. Here are some of the important reasons that say how social media is essential for e-learning today:

**1. It makes learners stay connected**

Staying connected with your peer group of learners gives a sense of belongingness and comfort. You can create a Facebook group community to share your thoughts and ideas about the courses. All this will help you find answers for your queries and understand the concepts even better. The presence of study groups and online communities not only makes you connected but keeps you motivated as it helps learners to have face-to-face contact with their instructors and helps to keep the enthusiasm lively. Students can use social media to build strong networks and maintain healthy connections.

**2. It gives Student-Centric Approach**

Social media helps you to have more flexible Interactions. Learners can post their present challenges or ask peer learners and instructors questions. A person who has a solution for particular issues or questions can respond instantly. However, most learners agree that interacting in Facebook groups is more convenient than live discussions. As you know, in the classroom, people won’t get much time to discuss their doubts regarding the courses. But social media offers more flexibility when it comes to interaction between learners and instructors.

**3. Social media helps to share crucial information**

Another important benefit of leveraging social media in e-learning is that it gives you an easy and quick way to contact people. For example, if a learner or instructor wants to share their updates on certain topics, they can create a Facebook post or Instagram story. This will not consume more than a few minutes; also instructors can use Facebook live or Instagram live. And share the educational content with learners and respond to their doubts in real-time.

**4. Social media is easy-to-access**

Many people find social media as the best source for e-learning purposes due to its convenience. Learner can easily access the course material using their smartphones, PCs, and tablets, etc. Everything is simple as it allows instructors to connect with learners’ queries on time. All this can be done without logging into a specific platform with the ease of technology in education. The simple step to stay updated on courses is to enable their notifications! This is very beneficial for learners as they can view the comments of other people and get insights into their ideas. Hence, social media can improve the overall communication between learners and instructors.

**Social media as learning platforms**

Social media is basically an arrangement of systems that consists up of individuals, communities, companies or organizations with indistinguishable interests, attitudes, values, lifestyles, visions and friendships and in the field of e-learning. And these structures can be used in many ways and through a number of tools. And the most admired ones are:

1. **Facebook**

The demonstrator can easily create a closed or an open group, to share information, ideas, quizzes, questionnaires, materials, pictures, or even an entire page on a specific course or module. Students are free to talk about the various course-related issues, and can raise questions they might have, they also can post mutually any interesting information and general things they want to share.

1. **Twitter**

In e-learning platforms it is used as a backchannel for connecting with different learning communities or smaller classrooms over a specific topic or event, for sharing highlights, making statements, uploading pictures, etc. All trainers have to create an account and communicate using #hashtag with their students/followers. Twitter is mostly used for social learning.

1. **LinkedIn**

This is a solely a professional, still a social network, which have proved itself to be an extremely useful platform for e-learning. Nowadays, there are thousands of discussions and groups in various languages, where trainers, educators and influencers share their views, problems, developments and how-to do tips. It has an even much higher value as compared to the previous social platforms, as the students and participants can actually notice everyone’s professional profile and achievements, sometimes it usually determines the status of the discussion leader, organizer, or expert. If one is interested in e-learning and Instructional Design it highly motivates us to join the Instructional Design & E-Learning Professionals' LinkedIn Group.

1. **Google Plus**

Google plus is an uprising star for social learning. Google plus communities is mostly used as a learning platform and one of the major reasons is that both learners and coordinators are less distracted as compared to Facebook and Twitter.

1. **YouTube**

An excellent resource for e-learning. It’s free and can be used to support a class, while viewers can also rate the video’s content and quality, as well as comment. These videos can be part of a course, but instructors can also use it to broadcast entire tutorials or just teasers to attract the audience they want.

Despite of giving us so many privileges IT and social media cannot replace the tradition methods of teaching and here are some pros and cons of it.

It is clear that there are positive and negative impacts of everything in everyone’s life, and one of that includes our social networking routine. The practical application of social media has both advantages as well as disadvantages and is a matter of frequent discussion. The engagement in social media by the general public has increased drastically over the past few years since, social media is spread across all generations and professions including people from all ages and is commonly used all over the world. Social media helps the users to connect with others users and enables them to create a community. It’s much more about constructing relationships than simply declaring or posting and not engaging with others. It is certainly changing the ways how one communicates. The main advantages of the role of social media in e-learning includes:

Social media has allowed individuals to be more active in content formation. Anyone who has the access to computers and an Internet connection can participate in social media and come up with their own writing, art, videos, photography and commentary to the Internet, as well as helps in conducting business online. Using of online social networks in the educational process is being reinforced by several educational, technological researchers, who have emphasized the advantages of technologies and has brought the worldwide connectivity with the fastest feedback mechanism to us and providing us the opportunity of working globally. Positive empowerment, social media empowers one to enables how technological change is linked to forces of globalization, political institutions, and historical developments, and how it affects democracy and social change. It also provides us with a thorough theoretical and methodological concepts in media and communication studies. It also enables us to apply for recent research skills to carry out research in diverse fields. Social media helps in making up of reflective and well- trained graduates who understands the diverseness of social, cultural, political and technological complexities of social media and who also helps to solve complex problems and get their solutions which helps in taking important decisions which are more logical in character.

Despite of having so many advantages social media platform and IT resources also have several disadvantages which includes the privacy concerns sharing one’s online location or getting in danger at work place because of sharing something inappropriate or sharing too much with the public can create some issues that can’t ever be resolved. While, using a social media network one is all done on the same computers or mobile and other devices, that sometimes may motivate too much sitting down in one place for too long. Gazing into the light coming from computers or mobile screen at night can negatively affects one’s ability to get a proper night sleep and creates problems. The quality of a discussion while using social media is unpleasant because one cannot sense the emotions or interest of the other person conversing.

Impact of plagiarism and copyright and masked identities: Since, social media is very easy to copy and reproduce, there are much more chances of plagiarism and copyright which raises the questions on copyright laws. Digital technology provides us with the wide scope to hide our identities. Studies reveals that people are much more expecting to behave anti-socially, rather than thinking about that the consequences. Bullying, trolling, stalking, threatening, and insulting behavior have all increased drastically with the use of the internet. People make fake personas for the purposes of scamming and defrauding.

Addiction: social media, computer games, messaging, and dating websites can be addictive. Games you want to play in order to buy the next version. Websites want us to interact so that they can bring in advertising money. Users usually end up wasting huge amount of time and money. Moreover, most of the digital gadgets have a short lifespan and as the technology is advancing at a fast pace, devices and machines become obsolete thus, forces people to get addicted to move further for the new gadgets and technology resulting in more budget access and befriend children.

**Conclusion**

Information technology (IT) connects the lives of all learners. However, one may not recognise their dependence on computers, the internet, and online learning resources as a representation of the incorporation of IT in learning processes. Therefore, future generations of learners may not know any other way of learning apart from interactions with e-learning. Social media isn't about money or institutions. It isn't about stockholders making money. It isn't about corporate ownership. Social media is about normal people controlling the world around them and finding creative new roads to bring their collective ideas together to get what they actually want. And e-learning platforms via social media is one of the most innovative platforms that the world could ever get. Though social media has both positive and negative impacts on society, yet one should know its importance in the present world’s scenario. Everyone should be ready to follow this principle – “Don’t use digital media to impress people, but use it to impact people in a positive way.

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