



A REVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN EDUCATION

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work has been done by myself and no portion of the work contained in this Thesis has been submitted in support of any application for any other degree or qualification on this or any other university or institution of learning.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family who have given me their support and always
been there for me at all times.



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Social media has gained in popularity as a social communication tool and become increasingly important in our daily lives. Social media are primarily application tools for discussing and sharing information. Social media applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Second Life, and Flickr, have become a global phenomenon attracting millions of users. Thus, social media popularity and its unique features contribute to potential e-learning, especially in online distance learning. It increases interest among educators to make use of social media technologies in education. It is also attracting the attention of many researchers to examine the usage and implications of social media applications, implemented in education.

This project attempts to review the functions and uniqueness of social media applications. It also focuses on current research findings and their impact in education. A “Documentation and Application Review” method is used to explore social media functions, uniqueness, current research findings, and their impact in education. Several popular applications and related articles have been chosen as the object of this review. A total of eight social applications were selected, based on the most popular applications, as listed in TopTenReviews (<http://www.toptenreviews.com>) and Ebizma (<http://www.ebizmba.com>). Meanwhile, articles were chosen from conference proceeding papers and journal articles, from academic databases, such as AACE, ACM, IEEE, EBSCO, and ProQuest, through the Multimedia University’s Siti Hasmah Digital Library. A total of 12 papers were selected for this review project.

The findings show that social media supports social interaction. Users interact with people through constructing, contributing, and sharing, their content. Different social media applications serve different functions and uniqueness. Social networking allows the connection of people, where they can maintain their updates with other people. The blog application allows users to publish, post, and share their





content, with other bloggers. In addition, wiki allows the user to read about news topics and comment on articles. Social bookmarking allows the user save bookmarks online and share them with others, while the virtual world allows social interaction through an immersive and engaging environment. This review shows that social media have both positive and negative implications on education. However, it promises a conducive and effective learning environment. Social media allows instructors to connect with learners to discuss assignments, upcoming events, useful links, and other work, out of the classroom. Some of the regularly discussed issues include privacy, security, identity, and motivation. Most of these issues are internet issues. Most studies report that the implementing of social media in learning is still at the nascent stage, and thus, requires more research and exploration to accommodate an effective learning.

Hence, these findings provide an overview of information about social media applications in an educational setting. This may assist further research on social media, which promises better learning and strategic implementation. Future project recommendations into web based social media, may extend its focus to mobile media, and augmented reality. The benefits of mobile computing devices and ubiquitous technologies, as powerful access devices, may offer tremendous opportunities to implement social media within m-learning.



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

COPYRIGHT PAGE	ii
DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
DEDICATION	v
ABSTRACT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Review	2
1.2 Problem Statement	3
1.3 Research Question	4
1.4 Objectives of the Review	4
1.5 Significant of the Review	5
1.6 Scope of the Review	5
1.7 Summary	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.0 Introduction	7
2.1 History/Evolution of Media	8
2.2 Social Media and its Definition	11
2.3 Social Media Application	13
2.3.1 Social Networking	13
2.3.2 Blogging	15
2.3.3 Wiki	16
2.3.4 Social Bookmarking	17
2.3.5 Virtual World	18
2.4 Summary	19



CHAPTER 3: METHODS	20
3.0 Introduction	20
3.1 Selection of the Reviewed Materials	20
3.1.1 Social Media Applications	21
3.1.2 Social Media Articles	21
3.2 Method of Review	21
3.2.1 Review of Applications	22
3.2.2 Review of Articles	22
3.3 Summary	23
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	24
4.0 Introduction	24
4.1 Function and Uniqueness of Social Media	25
4.1.1 Social Networking	26
4.1.2 Blogging	30
4.1.3 Wiki	33
4.1.4 Social Bookmarking	35
4.1.5 Virtual World	38
4.1.6 Summary of Social Media Function and Uniqueness	42
4.2 Impacts of Social Media Application in Education	45
4.2.1 Social Networking in Education	46
4.2.2 Blogging in Education	55
4.2.3 Wiki in Education	63
4.2.4 Social Bookmarking in Education	72
4.2.5 Virtual World in Education	78
4.3 Summary	86
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	87
5.0 Introduction	87
5.1 Function and Uniqueness of Social Media	88
5.2 Impacts of Social Media Application in Education	90
5.3 Limitations	92
5.4 Future Work	93
5.5 Conclusion	93
APPENDICES	95
APPENDIX A: List of selected articles for review	95
REFERENCE	97

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	An Overview of the Review Plan	23
Table 4.1	A Summary of the Functions, Features and Applications of Social Media	43
Table 4.2a	Articles of Social Networks in Education	52
Table 4.2b	Articles of Social Media and Informal Learning Spaces	53
Table 4.2c	Articles of Moodle vs. Facebook	54
Table 4.3	Article of Characterizing the Different Blogging Behaviour	61
Table 4.4a	Article of Using Wikis to Promote Quality Learning in Teacher Training	69
Table 4.4b	Article of Wiki as a Collaborative Learning Tool	70
Table 4.4c	Article of Social, Usability, and Pedagogical Factors Influencing Students' Learning Experiences with Wikis and Blogs	71
Table 4.5a	Cognitive Processes Enabled by Tagging	74
Table 4.5b	Article of Bookmarking/Tagging in the Web 2.0 Era	75
Table 4.5c	Article of Using Social Bookmarking to Enhance Cooperation/Collaboration in a Teacher Education Program	76
Table 4.6	Article of the Realities of Working in Virtual Worlds	84

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Timeline of Social Media (http://smcmumbai.com/)	10
Figure 4.1a	Facebook Interface	28
Figure 4.1b	LinkedIn Interface	29
Figure 4.2a	Blogger Interface	31
Figure 4.2b	Twitter Interface	32
Figure 4.3	Wikipedia Interface	34
Figure 4.4	<i>del.icio.us</i> Interface	36
Figure 4.5a	A screenshot of Second Life	39
Figure 4.5b	A screenshot of Habbo	41
Figure 4.6	A summary of Social Networking elements (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003)	50
Figure 4.7a	Main stage of Campus Hamburg showing a video on the main screen as well as on each panel connected to the seats for the students. The lecturer is on the stage using the voice system.	79
Figure 4.7b	Construction site Students@work for innovative projects by students	81

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In recent years, web technology has changed from Web 1.0 to the new era, which is known as Web 2.0 (Marenzi, Demidova, & Nejd, 2008). This evolution has affected many aspects of e-learning in both educational and corporate settings (Chen, Hsu, & Caropreso, 2009). It promotes various types of communication: one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many, synchronous and asynchronous (Marenzi et al., 2008). The read-only medium has been transformed into a publishing and sharing of web contents.

Social media, as part of Web 2.0, is an essential category of online media, which was established on an integrated medium for people to talk, participate, share, create networking, and bookmarking online (Jones, 2009). Practically, social media or social software is an application that enables users to interact and share data among others. Furthermore, it is easy to create content, manage and maintain as it does not require the user to have high computer skills. Social media applications include blogs, wikis and popular systems such as Google Maps, Facebook and MySpace (Pilgrim, 2008).

This report attempts to review the use of social media in supporting e-learning within the general public. Web 2.0 brings a change in modern higher education as the collaborative learning allows better academic efficiency (Al-Senaidi, 2008). This is a new paradigm, which helps to widen the potential for global, interactive knowledge sharing, construction, and distribution across diverse groups intersecting countries and cultures (Chen et al., 2009). Social media has been gradually introduced into classroom teaching and learning. It improves the education standard to a more collaborative

learning process. This technology makes the collaborative learning environment to be inviting, exciting and full of learning opportunities. However, the Web 2.0 and social media is still at its developing stage and demanding for clarification on many vague issues before it reaches a suitable standard for the higher education system.

1.1 Background of the Review

Social media supports an individual to interact socially and thus creating a learning community. In a learning environment, group learning is more effective rather than traditional individual learning. Through group learning, the ideas can be expanded and exchanges of information can be made possible. This approach creates motivation and working teams. It enables students to participate online (Pilgrim, 2008), collaborate and exchange information through dynamic and interactive features (Moreno, Martinez, & Ruiz, 2008). Furthermore, with Web 2.0 applications, students are able to explore and experience, and develop key skills for social studies understanding, interpretation, evaluation, analysis, etc. (Holcomb & Beal, 2009).

This project concentrates on a review of social media applications and functions as a tool in e-learning and the implication on education in creating an effective learning environment. It provides new means to the education industry as it changes how the learners study. This study of social media focuses on two important elements, such as collaboration and multimedia. It creates a cooperative learning environment rather than competition among students as stated in De Pedro's study (as cited by Al-Senaidi, 2008). Collaboration also contributes in building e-learning content. The transferring of information becomes more freely. Meanwhile, multimedia in social media facilitates the media content itself, enhancing the ability of the media to engage students and increase their motivation.

Collaboration and multimedia design must ensure the message reaches the target audience. It should be attractive to inspire and motivate people to respond to it. The

usefulness of a social media application shows the positive perception in higher education, whereby it contributes towards effective learning. The implementation of Web 2.0 meets the requirements of part-time students, which used a blended learning approach to support communication and collaboration (Chen et al., 2009).

1.2 Problem Statement

The Traditional Learning Management System still approaches group membership in a top-down fashion. In current learning environments, it is hard when a single person acts without some specifically assigned membership (Marenzi et al., 2008). It is important today to have learning community tools as the participating platform for a group of people who has the same interest and goal. This evolution creates a space for them to interact directly in a virtual environment with the ability to control the content and information sharing.

Nowadays, due to the educational system for part time students, various software applications, especially social media applications, is often used to support blended learning (Zeiller, 2009). The blended learning is often used for distance learners, which are focusing on mixing a face to face learning environment and online learning. It emphasizes on student-centred instruction to create active and interactive students. It generates a new learning management system, which integrates various social software into a single system.

In real education system, e-learning strategies are still not exploiting the means of social media application to improve education. Even though Web 2.0 is in its promising stages of introduction at university level, an effort is made to develop recommendations for making this new technology universally acceptable (Al-Senaidi, 2008). A depth analysis of this technology should be made to bring the changes and improvement in education.



1.3 Research Question

This project focuses on the following research questions:

1. What is the current function and uniqueness of social media applications?
2. What are the research findings and impacts of social media applications in education?

1.4 Objectives of the Review

The aim of this project is to review the function of social media applications and to explore the research findings and the impacts when it is implemented in education. The findings of this project will offer a comprehensive overview of social media and the use of social media in learning to support e-learning. This project has two objectives, namely:

1. To review different types of functions and uniqueness of some popular social media applications
2. To explore research findings and impacts of the use of social media applications in education



1.5 Significance of the Review

The emergence of Web 2.0 brings new means in the educational system. The new paradigm of Web 2.0 connects people together to experience the knowledge in a more meaningful way compared to web 1.0, which is static and typically not interactive (Holcomb & Beal, 2009). The users of web 1.0 have limited accessibility of the content they visit and are unable to contribute anything. Web 2.0 are labelled as social tools because they are a socially connected web where everyone is able to share and exchange information collaboratively.

The social media contributes to higher education system, especially for part time students, which shows a significant increase of part-time studies during 2008 (Zeiller, 2009). These media technologies meet the requirements of part time students, which often apply the blended learning concepts. The concept of part time programs offers several kinds of distance learning activities carried out by Web 2.0 technologies such as social media (Zeiller, 2009).

1.6 Scope of the Review

The scope of this project is to review the general function of social media application and its uniqueness. Therefore, the project is also to analyse the social media impacts on education systems, which can affect teachers and learners directly or indirectly. The selected social software for this project includes social networking, blogging, wiki, social bookmarking and virtual world. All of this social software was often used as the platform to support e-learning in creating an effective and conducive learning environment (Al-Senaidi, 2008). It was listed in the top list in TopTenReview (<http://www.toptenreviews.com>) and Ebizma (<http://www.ebizmba.com>) in July 2010. For the articles review, 12 articles were taken from academic databases such as AACE, ACM, IEEE, EBSCO and ProQuest through Multimedia University's Siti Hasmah Digital Library. The articles were focused on learning and teaching, especially for

distance learner programs in higher education level, which applied the collaborative learning. The list of selected articles can be found in Appendices in page 95.

1.7 Summary

Research on social media in education is significantly expanding. Social media become the global trends in educational technologies where good opportunity is found in formal and informal learning spaces. However, this technology is still at a developing stage, which requires exploration and experimentation. This chapter describes the introductory part of this review project. It contains the background of the review, problem statement, research questions, objectives of the review, significance of the review, and a scope of the review. All of these elements are clearly stated to ensure the project is on the right track. This project explores some of the popular social media applications. It concentrates on the functions, uniqueness, current research findings and impacts of the use of social media applications in education. It gives users a general overview about the social media application as a collaboration tool, which helps users to learn. The project was concerned about the use of social media technologies in higher learning institutions as it provides a new form of communication in academic collaboration. The next chapter will cover the literature review of this project. It will provide further information of social media such as history of media, definition of social media and types of social media applications.