Article

Social Media Integration In Secondary Education In Pakistan

Rida Ahmed

Rock Paper Scissors, Pakistan

std_14750@iobm.edu.pk

Abstract

This paper investigates the adequacy of social media implementation in the context of secondary education in Pakistan and highlights the importance and necessity of social media in secondary education. This research has helped in understanding the pros and cons of social media implementation in classrooms and also facilitated in analyzing whether social media helps in student learning, classroom performances, competencies and academic grow. The qualitative study paradigm was used for this research. Six phenomenological interviews were conducted from secondary school teachers.In the light of the derived results. It was concluded that social media was an essential tool that could be used to make classrooms more engaging and ethnically diverse. Results suggested that teachers spent time implementing social media in their classrooms for academic purposes and teachers used these forums for self-education and to interact with like-minded people. Social media can serve the most momentous purposes in education system as today's digitalized world is all about the Internet and technology, and hence it becomes compulsory for the educationist to understand the importance social networking.

Keywords: 21st century skills, awareness, secondary schools, social forums, social media

Introduction

This is a digitalized era, an era filled with the wonders of technology. In this fast-paced world where tasks are expected to be done before time and elongated assignments are concluded within few hours, people can work on immense projects and can make huge monetary transactions from home. Technology is the reason behind all the comfort and ease. Social media sites like Facebook, Linkedin, Pinterest, MySpace, and many others have conquered the lives of many, particularly the students. Interaction between teachers, students, school management, and parents is just a click of a button away, converging educational system in the form of learning management system. According to Johnson (2013), students today grow up in an environment of swiftly changing technology where most of a student's time is spent on social networking forums and online interactions. The acceptance of social media by secondary students is detectable, but the potential of implementing social media for educational purposes in still debatable (Pollara, 2011).

With the passage of time, learning theories and learning methodologies have transformed. One of the theories related to social media implementation is known as connectivism, which is considered to be the learning theory of the digital age. Connectivism defines both knowledge and learning and their processes. It is a study which focuses on the role of social and cultural framework and describes the implementation of new connections and skills to be put into operation in the existing networks. According to connectivism, a learner can explore more and can learn unambiguously by plugging into different networks (Long & Siemens, 2011).

Information can be found from various places yet, it is crucial to know from where to find the required information. This theory was introduced in 2005 by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. Their main concern was to emphasize the liability and role of networking and association, links, and relation among people (Connectivism, 2014).

For the student's engagement, usage of social media is a very important phenomenon, but very little is known about the importance of social media implementation in education (Reuben, 2008). Thus, implementation of social media is applicable for both students and teachers in order to work collaboratively after school. It is fun and useful if utilized appropriately. Commonly, the term Social Media Websites is used for all related social sites, not specifically Facebook or Twitter. There are various social networking tools and resources available, which can enhance learning skills and make classrooms more interactive and knowledgeable.

Purpose of the study

It has been observed mainly in the secondary schools of Pakistan that the use of social media forums in a classroom setting is not encouraged and in some cases, looked down upon. Teachers feel uncertain in applying social forums and websites in their curriculum and lesson plans.The core purpose of the study is to understand how educationists can implement the resources in secondary school classrooms and what measures should be adopted in order to entail social media forum for learning management.

This research sheds light upon the teachers' responsiveness and awareness regarding the social media execution in classroom settings. The study helps in understanding why implementing social media in educational setup is essential, particularly in this time, to what extent are the teachers and facilitators aware of its significance, and do they really undergo the need of integrating social media forums in classrooms or not?

Research questions

The main research question was:

What perceptions do the teachers hold regarding the integration of social media tools in secondary education?

The sub questions were:

1. To what extent can various social media tools be integrated into secondary education?
2. What are the effects of social media integration on the learning of secondary school students?

Literature Review

The use of social media is now dominating the Pakistani society and has gained popularity within a span of four to five years. The use of Facebook since 2012 has increased up to 750 million users, Linkedin up to 100 million members, Twitter up to177 million tweets, and YouTube approximately three billion views per day (Bryer, 2012). Today's students in colleges and schools are much more exposed to multiple technologies, which include use of desktop computers, laptops, cellular devices, e-readers, tablets, and many more, which constantly keep on engaging students in networking, blogging, online content sharing, and even text messaging (Browning, Gerlitch & Westerman, 2011).

Theories related to social media

There are three schools of social media theories: (a) micro, (b) macro, and (c) connectivism theories. The ,icro theory focuses on the framework studying the variations of contributions of online information and communication, whereas the macro theory focuses upon analyzing the dynamics and structure of social actors and content of social media in the light of global views. Connectivismis is a network theory for teaching and social learning. According to Duke, Harper and Johnston (2013), "The core skill is the ability to see connections between information sources and to maintain that connection to facilitate continual learning"(p. 5). The purpose of these theories is to contribute in understanding the phenomenon of social media that why users contribute, how the relationships are building up, and how the helpful content is discovered in social media (Pan, 2012).

Micro theories

Social exchange theory is an example of micro theory. This theory states that social media is highly dependent on the content shared by the users. This theory was originated from studies done by sociologists, investigating exchange of information between individuals or small groups (Emerson, 1975). According to this

theory, individuals tend to get connected in behaviors they find gratifying, fulfilling and avoid behaviors that are too uncertain and risky. This theory is about the cost-benefit framework and elaborates how the relationships are built, how communication among people takes place, and how communities are shaped (Homas, 1958).

Macro theory

McLuhan's media theory is an example of macro theory. Laughey (2007) enforces that media leaves a greater impact on the society rather than the media content. Media itself has a larger effect on the people than the media content; the occurrence of new communication prototype will transform user's behavior forever. According to McLuhan's arguments, social media has changed the society's thinking not because of the material it contains, but because of the mode of communication it necessitates (McLuhan, 1995).

Connectivism theory

Downes (2014) believes that connectivism learning in the 21st century has transformed learning due to technology and similarly the way students perceive knowledge. Not very long ago, students used to memorize and learn vocabulary and facts and for that matter, they used to read from the text books and other relevant material; whereas, now students take aid from Google if they need to find out about something (Downes, 2014). This theory is not only about learning through Google or the Internet, but it is about learning through quality networking and focuses on the role of social and cultural context.

Social forums in students' lives

Social media plays a huge part in students' lives both personal and academic; therefore, if the educationists make full use of social media and help students grow academically then it is a win-win situation for both. Teachers should be looking at social network forums to enhance students' learning in different ways (Hughes, 2014). On the other hand, Matteson (2012) highlights that majority of teachers and educators are unenthusiastic and relatively slow in adopting the technological resources in the classrooms. The reason being lack of knowledge, lack of experiences, fear of espousing changes in classrooms, and hesitation in transforming from traditional classroom set up to technological oriented set up.

The social media implementation is not limited to teacher and student's usage only, but it can also be useful for peer to peer interactions. Teachers and peers can interact with one another through social networks and can share new strategies and ideas together (Hays, 2014). Nevertheless, integration of social media can become severely atrocious for teachers who do not use it correctly. Experiences have shown that teachers have faced devastated circumstances due to non-professional use of social media. This includes bullying, harassment, obnoxious content, and graphical pictures posts on the online platform (Simpson, 2010). There is no turning back from the fact that social media has conquered the lives of many, particularly students. Consequently it is essential for teachers to apply social media forums in their daily lesson plans and curriculum in order to make their classrooms more interactive.

Pakistan's milieu

The awareness of utilization of social media is in the embryonic stage in Pakistan. According to the latest studies by BBC (2012), approximately 67% of Pakistan young adult population is exposed to Facebook. Nevertheless, some studies in Pakistan represent that social media is affecting the future of students (Tariq 2012). The findings of Tariq, Mehboob, Khan, and FaseeUllah (2012), show that social media and exclusively social networking forums like Facebook, Linkedin, Orkut, and Twitter are negatively affecting the education as well as the lives of students.

Some studies highlight that social media is an excellent source for collaborative learning. In most of the schools, social network websites, and technological gadgets like tablets and e-books are becoming very popular tools. According to a research by Larson (2012), there are some major points which teachers should keep in mind while utilizing the social media and its related tools in classrooms. Larson suggests that the teachers should avoid criticism on social forums as it could lead to student demotivation and disempowerment. Other than that, teachers must keep their confidential information private for negative ramifications (Goodman, 2008).

There have been debates on pros and cons of social media, where some say that social media and social forums are injurious for students; whereas, others say that it helps students to cultivate both academically and socially. It has been observed that most international studies are in much favor of integration of social media in secondary as well as higher education, but in the Pakistani context, integration of social media at the secondary or higher education is considered to be an enormous problem. Studies tell us that in Pakistan, teachers and educationists feel that use of social forums are distressing and overwhelming the lives and routine of students. Now the question is why is this situation visible in Pakistan? The answer is simple; normally it has been seen that in the Pakistani framework, particularly in an academic scenario, implementation and use of social media lacks supervision and guidance.

Social media guideline and execution in schools

Anderson (2014) states that instructional technologists and educational consultants, in order to achieve reliable guidelines for social media execution, have to bank on the school management. To do so, firstly a team should be organized which could comprise educators who apply social media resources in their classrooms and those who do not apply it. This team should take campus heads, coordinators, lead teachers, and technical and other staff in confidence for optimal results. The second step is the research phase. The finalized team must start working by means of monitoring the existing policies that are in place in the school. In-depth monitoring and evaluation helps in crystallizing learning opportunities. Other than that, the team must also examine and analyze social media guidelines of other schools or institutes (Anderson, 2014). The third step includes the collection and drafting of the received data. It is important that all the team members should agree on the finalized draft and the obtained information should be properly documented. This stage should also allow teachers, heads, and other members to contribute and give their feedback (Anderson, 2014). The final step should consider implementing the agreed guidelines within the school premises. After the policy document is approved and signed by the team members,

it is now moved further to the bigger picture of implementation. It is an essential duty of every teacher to educate and inform their students, parents, guardians, and other communities regarding the social media implementation policies document (Anderson, 2014). This, social media implementation should be done in a proper ans systematic manner in order for it to be fruitful.

Methodology

Qualitative study paradigm was used for this research. The main purpose of qualitative paradigm was to explore the phenomenon of social media integration in secondary schools in Pakistan. This approach helped in providing information and different perceptions of teachers who have an experience of utilizing social media forum in their classrooms. Research conducted on qualitative paradigm enables the researcher to see the insights of any problem in greater profoundness. Thus, phenomenology study design, which elaborates and generalizes the multiple meanings and understandings of several individuals and their experiences was used to investigate the research questions. Phenomenological study is considered to be very well suited to study emotional and expressive human behavior and experiences (Worthington, 2010). Integration of social media is an imperative topic, which needs to be researched in an educational sector, because as mentioned previously the social media is taking over the society and has almost become a basic necessity. Phenomenological research study attempts to study and comprehend the participant's perception and provides point of views of any particular experience or situation.

Sampling and participants

Purposive sampling which is also known as judgmental sampling was selected for this research because it focuses on the knowledge of the population as well as the purpose of the study (Crossman, 2014). Purposive sampling is assembled to dole out specific purpose and the need. The core purpose of this research was to determine the use of social media and its implementation by teachers in secondary education. This research also reflects upon the teacher's perspectives and understanding of social forums and evaluated how teachers felt in applying social media applications in their classrooms. Six secondary school teachers were selected to conduct this research. from secondary sections of different schools in Karachi. The sample included four teachers from secondary classes and two from O level sections. This sample of teachers was from grade six till grade ten and O-Levels because one of the studies conducted by Lenhart (2015) suggests that Facebook is one of the most popular and the most commonly used social media forum among teenagers and the students enrolled in grade seven and onwards. Other than Facebook, students frequently use Instagram and Snapchat as well.

Instrument

In depth interviews were employed for the study. Such type of interviews collect qualitative data through open-ended questions and the responses are usually recorded by voice recorders or any other medium. Also, open ended questionnaires were used where data collection through interviews was not possible.

Data collection

Two participants participated in face to face interviews, two of the participants were not able to make it to the interviews because of schedule constraint; therefore, they were asked to give their responses via Whatsapp voice messages application. Similarly one of the interviews were conducted through Skype video call due to disturbed law and order situation in the city. One of the interviews was documented as the participant was more comfortable in writing down his responses rather than a dialogue or verbal communication. Table 1 below gives a clear picture of the methods used for data extraction.

Table 1. Methods used for data collection

Number of Participants	Mode of Data Collection
2	Face-to-face interviews
2	Whatsapp Voice Message
1	Skype Call
1	Open-ended Questionnaire

Data analysis

Firstly, participants were informed almost a week before the interview and also consent letter was provided to them, which stated that their identity would be kept anonymous and no names woulf be declared throughout the research. A series of questions were asked from the participants which encouraged and triggered them to speak more about their experiences and perceptions regarding social media implementation in secondary classrooms. Data acquired from these interviews were analyzed. Firstly, all in depth interviews were transcribed. Secondly coding of the transcribed data was done, and lastly thematic analysis was incorporated.

Findings

While conducting the interviews, it was very clear that the teachers were using social media in their lesson plans and some of the teachers had a very positive feedback regarding social media as well. The most commonly used social media tools were Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Google doc, YouTube, Flicker, My space and Pinterest. The teachers were of the view that it was important to spread awareness among parents and school management concerning social media's implementation in the classrooms. A majority of the teachers were in favor of introducing social media forums in their classrooms, and some of them were already integrating it. Teachers did not feel uncertain to share the benefits and unconstructive aspects of the social media. One of the findings was that almost every participant had integrated social media in their classroom settings to a certain extent, which helped them to conduct their teaching more proficiently. After going through the interviews of different teachers, it was observed that the interviews could be divided into the following main themes:

1. Inadequate resources and infrastructure
2. Need of surveillance
3. Policy and guidelines

Inadequate resources and infrastructure

One of the major themes extracted from the data was inadequate resources and infrastructure. If the infrastructure of a school is not appropriate then there is little benefit that students would get by implementing new technology based pedagogy.

> *"I wanted social networking to have a positive effect on … my students' performance and I can't say it happened for sure. Because…I will tell you why…because hota hai kay (what actually happen is) we do not have a very good…infrastructure to measure."*

This statement by one of the participants shows that due to lack of infrastructure and resources, teachers face numerous issues in order to incorporate social media in their lesson plans. Resources play an essential role in making the lessons more interactive and knowledgeable; however, lack of resources can be the most noticeable reason for poor classroom management and deprived lesson plan. Lack of resources can become very demotivating for teachers because if the school does not provided suitable ICT oriented infrastructure to the teachers as well as the students, implementation of technology would be out of question. It also seemed that the administration was not willing to take a step forward in this direction. As explained by a teacher:

> *"It has some sort of educational objectives when it comes to allowing social-media in the classes and this is from the administrative side …teachers 'shayed allow bi kerdain' (teachers might allow it) as long as their teaching and learning*

> *objectives are acquired, but as far as administration is concerned 'unhey ko yeh problem hoti hai' (administration of school has a problem with social media implementation in classroom)."*

Need of surveillance

Another theme was on the need of surveillance in which one of the participants stated the following, as translated:

> *"The negative side is that if you integrate social network sites without surveillance or guidance, then the students tend to get diverted from the brief provided to them and tasks get side-tracked or misunderstood and they start using social media for their own purposes."*

A teacher narrated her experience thus:

> *"Once I uploaded an assignment on the Facebook (pause) but …instead of answering it, students started abusing each other and even one student said 'I love you' to another female student on that forum and the situation went out of control for me as the students were continuously creating a chaos. I was really what you can - I was really upset! And I reported to the principal who took notice of it and I was really embarrassed in front of her (principal)."*

One of the teachers mentioned that while integrating social media forums in classroom, teachers need to be more watchful and prepared because sometimes students turn out to be defocused and

they start doing ineffectual chores on the internet. In order to avoid such circumstances the teachers need to have proper surveillance and supervision.

Policy and guidelines

One of the most prominent and important theme that emerged was the application of policy and proper guidelines of social media implementation. Many teachers shared their insights regarding the suitable policy and guidelines. One of teachers shared her opinion that most of the time school administration is vigilant to enable the access of social media in the classrooms; the root cause of this issue is that there are no suitable policies and guidelines formulated for students to follow. A teacher commented:

"So what I have learnt from this experience is that before starting any new thing in your teaching, you should…first you should train your students how to behave and introduce ethics of that forum as well."

The teacher also mentioned that before initiating any new program and particularly commencing social media in education, the teachers should properly guide and train their students in order to avoid any discomforting situation. A teacher lamented:

"The main drawback of social network media is that we don't know if the content is true or if it is made up. Yeah, it is important, but there is a lot of information in it which is really hard to trace out that which ones are the real ones and which are the false ones."

Another teacher made a very interesting point that not all the content available on the social forum, that is, the Internet looks authentic and it tends to get much harder for the teacher to trace its authenticity. By the content, teacher meant information available on the Internet. Largely, whatsoever information found on the social forum is taken from the web itself, and it is quite hard to examine which information is authentic; therefore, it becomes essential for the teachers to look deeper and exhume the academic content which contains genuine information.

In the light of the derived results, social media is another imperative tool that can be used to make classrooms more engaging, significant, and ethnically diverse. Social media's negative aspects can be managed efficiently if the strategies introduced for student's engagement are well prepared and organized. Social media can be seen as an educational resource and it does not have to be a distraction from learning objective.

Discussion

A large number of researches have been derived in order to enhance the use of social media in education. For example, Li, Helou and Gille (2012) conducted a study to incorporate social media for collaborative learning in the context of higher education; Silius, Miilumäki, Huhtamäki, Tebest, Meriläinen and Pohjolainen (2011) developed a social networking website for college students in order to enhance their collaborative and social interaction of students. Both studies revealed that integrating social media and making it a part of traditional learning is an effective way to encourage students to learn and contribute in the collective

knowledge process.

According to the first research question, social media's various tools can be integrated into secondary education. Its network is very vast and it has reached out to a large number of audience in a very short span of time. This research was able to find out that the most commonly used social media tools by students are Facebook, Twitter, Whatapp, Instagram, Google doc, YouTube, Flicker, My space, and Pinterest. These are the tools which are used by students frequently. Few teachers seek assistance from the applications like Edublog, Padlet, Friendzy, Edmodo which are not as much popular as other social forum tools, but these forums aid in the academic learning and academic growth of students. The findings show that teachers incorporate social media's various tools in order to enhance their pedagogical skills and to foster self-paced learning.

Most of the time, parents as well as school management believe that social media is an open forum with no or very minute privacy and security, which repels school management and some teachers to encourage students to participate in integrating social media. Social media tools due to lack of privacy are unable to keep up with the privacy of its users and are thus harassed and sometime bullied because of lack of security and privacy (Tariq, 2012). This is one of the major issues which needs to be taken care of in order to have an uninterrupted and smooth implementation of social media in secondary classes. According to Impact of Social Media (2013), it has been assumed that there is a negative side of social media,but one needs to keep in mind that this is the outcome when the students engage themselves in unethical actions and behavior. Sharing

irrelevant, obnoxious material, bullying fellow mates are all causes which increase the level of fear of school management and stop them to integrate social media in classrooms.

In order to spread awareness of social media in secondary school system, first and foremost it is important to educate the school management (Anderson, 2014) and parents, as they are the most fundamental agencies and without their support, integration of social media in education will not be possible and issues pertaining to social media in education would become harder to get to the bottom of. In the light of the derived results, some teachers incorporate social media tools in their lesson plans; whereas, there are few teachers who do not do so. School management carries a significant part in the advancement and evolution of school; therefore, it becomes imperative to enlighten the school management regarding social media's implementation and its significance.

Seminars, workshops, in-house programs can be conducted to broaden the awareness (Anderson, 2014). Integrating cyber-smart resources and providing information regarding cyber-smart will enhance awareness and control threats of social networking. Professional development workshops for teachers can be organized as well as Internet Safety Awareness programs for parents and students. In the 21st century, every step involves technology, where the theory of connectivism comes into play (Downes, 2012). It is highly imperative for the management of schools to transform traditional management into technological oriented management.

Social media affects students learning in either ways. Social networking has immensely increased the quality of collaborative

learning for students. Students are now able to share information, communicate, and learn, which has increased productivity and has helped students to learn and work in teams. Furthermore, integration of social media also helps students to survive in the professional world. It helps them to create connections and build up professional relationship with the industries they want to persue their careers in and build connection ions through connectivism (Downes, 2012). Another positive aspect about social media is that because students spend much time working with the gadgets and technologies, it helps thems to build a strong familiarity with computers and the technicalities of the internet.

Students intense focus on technology in education helps them to fabricate skills that will assist them throughout their lives. Similarly, being able to share and post pictures, videos have lead to a greater amount of sharing of art work done by students. One of the positive effects of social media is that one can get immediate feedback from colleagues, friends, and teachers, which motivates students to redefine their abilities and can also provide confidence and help them decide what career path to pursue (Dunn, 2011). Other findings suggest that with the help of social forums, introvert students can interact with the teachers more openly (Reuben, 2008). Those students who feel reluctant asking questions in the classrooms can comfortably share their opinion on the social network. The outcome has been effective so far, thus it shows that social media is an enormous help in order to build up the self-confidence of students and works as an effectual ice breaker.

Students using social media give and receive information at a fast pace. Social media enables them to share their opinions, views,

projects, for example DIY (Do it you self) projects for courses and class projects. Time and again, people have failed to realize that social media is developing skills of students in a subliminal way (Baker, 2012). In Pakistan's academic scenario, there are many areas of social media which are left to be discovered in an educational context, Nonetheless, Pakistan is one of those countries which require ample amount of awareness regarding social media integration in secondary schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The key objective of this research was to bring forth the importance of integrating social media in the classrooms and instigating an awareness among the educational leaders. In comparison with the most prominent fields like ICT in Education and Mobile Learning, social media carries a broadened prospect and possibilities. Moreover, the research focused upon resolving and minimizing the issues faced by teachers particularly in Pakistan's scenario in order to integrate social media in their classroom settings. Social media has multiple purposes and globally it has been observed that it is being incorporated in the educational system on a large scale. Even in Pakistan, teachers are implementing social network in order to carry out their classroom lessons more efficiently. Some of the teachers use social media just to keep updating the students and to get connected with their students through Facebook classroom page, some use it for parents to collaborate and communicate. Hence, it shows that implementing social media in education is effective and convenient for teachers (Owens, 2014).

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