ETEC 676D Position Paper

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Social Networks and Education

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Introduction

At present, the education system is in a middle situation between going into the digital or to maintain the classical old educational form. Many people are supporting the classical teaching form and working to protect the educational system from changing and evolving.

On the other hand, a huge group of teachers and advocates are supporting the innovation and the idea of integrating technology in classrooms, especially the usage of the e-learning model. People who are supporting the classical form do not have a strong base of argument. Most of their concern is regarding the quality of educational activities. Besides, they are sharing concerns about the absence of the instructor and how that will impact the students learning outcomes while they are not giving technology integration any positive thoughts.

In this paper, the benefits of integrating the technology in classrooms and the impact of e-learning on the educational outcomes will be supported and compared to the opponents' points of view.

One of the most controversial technological tools in the educational field is the Social Networking (SN). Regardless that SN sites are widely used nowadays, educators still hesitant in using the SN in their teaching modules. Around 96% of students reported that they are using SN in their studying while 59% of them is using the sites to discuss educational issues and concerns, yet, education advocates still acting conventionally toward integrating the SN fully in the classrooms and the learning process.

Numerous amounts of research papers which support the idea of using the social media in the educational process can be found on the open web. The results of integrating the SN in the learning process is very promising. Most of the students who are using SN had better chance to correspond with their instructors due to the high convenience that the SN is providing in facilitating any needed reach-out or communication.

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Counter Argument

Parents, teachers, and many of the educational advocates are likely to blame the SN for the students' poor achievement, distraction, lack of concentration, and bad academic performance. A study found that spending more time on SN such as Facebook and Twitter led to bad grades for the students (Stollak.et.al, 2011). While those who spend less time on SN websites got better grades (Stollak.et.al, 2011). Another study is indicating that 16% of the students who are using the digital form of learning tends to drop their classes more frequently and not to complete their courses (Pituch & Lee, 2006). It has been claimed that regardless of the rapid growth of the e-learning field, it was not sufficiently successful in retaining the educational objectives and values (Sun.et.al, 2008).

While the educational environment has to be welcoming, peaceful, and comfortable to enable achieving its intended goals, the opponents of integrating SN in education rising concern of higher incidents of Cyber-Bullying, the widely opened floor of social sites allow the students to share and post various kinds of materials that might be inappropriate or intimidating for other students. Such uncontrollable feature will hurt having the needed safe learning environment for the students to thrive in their education (Monro & Fodeman, 2009).

Furthermore, some educators are worried about the development of the students' social and communication skills if the SN has been integrated into the educational process. Those concerns came as the SN provides the conveniences to avoid the direct social interaction which might be challenging for most youth students who will seek the comfort and the psychological shade by using the behind the screen communication tools instead of facing their fears and learn how to concur their fears.

Besides the adverse effect of the SN on the students' communication skills, concerns regarding the grammar and the syntax usage has been raised due to using the shortened messages and abbreviations such as "k", "cu", "gr8", and so on (Kemp & De Jonge, 2010). Educators and children development specialists are worried about un-dismissed damage in the linguistic skills due to texting in the shortcuts in language among youth (Kemp & De Jonge, 2010).

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Argument

The fast spreading of SN among people cannot be ignored. Statista website reposted that 2.77 billion people are using the SN around the globe (Statista, 2019). With a population of 7.58 billion people on earth (U.S.DepartmentofCommerce, 2019), the SN users represent 35% of the global population, which is a percent that cannot be ignored.

Although the older generations think that the communication through technology may affect young students negatively, the net generation believes that SN is improving their communication skills, help them to be multitasking, and collaboration among each other (Murray, 2008). The Digital Youth project which was conducted at the University of Southern California and the University of California- Berkeley, also mentioned that the SN sites are teaching the students very useful communication skills that will help them in the more and more technologically growing globe (Sims, 2007).

Besides, the safety point that the SN opponents are auguring about can be conquered and secured by teaching digital safety practices to students. Bullying, abuse, harassment, and any other form of violence are not problems that can be faced only on the internet, it also real-life issues that our community is suffering from daily in churches, schools, streets, even relative houses. So, is locking them from the community is the right solution to protect them from these forms of danger? If not, then why we call for blocking the internet from our education methods due to the fear of Cyber violence?

Besides, that, is not the SN is way beneficial than its potential danger when it is under supervision? According to Tynes research paper" Sacrificing the Educational and Psychosocial Benefits of Online Social Environments" Alternative methods should be adopted to grant the students' online safety, it has to be based on raising their digital awareness and teach them the principles of online safety practices (Tynes, 2007).

Social network sites' benefits are not limited to opportunities that provide to the students to take a role in the overall class or the smaller discussions' forms. Moreover, it allows the students who have social confronting challenges and the students with introverted personalities to be able to participate in classroom activities and discussions.

Furthermore, integrating the SN in the class will not take away the discussion activities from the classrooms. It will take place as written discussions instead of oral. Such activity will help in improving the students writing abilities rather than the claim that mentioned that the language abilities would deteriorate as they will be revising and correcting their posts and shares frequently (Murray, 2008).

Enkin and Jadad (1989) stated that:

" Students who attend prestigious universities derive success not simply for the outstanding educational opportunities but also through the social connections made with other classmates. These social connections can lead to marriage, joint business ventures, future political affiliations, as well as a host of other forms of relationships" (Jadad & Enkin, 1989).

In addition to all the SN useful features for students and learners, SN can serve the instructors and educators in improving their work and profession. It enables them to communicate and get connected to grow and support each other. SN can offer a good media and environment for professional collaboration, ideas exchanging, experience sharing, and discussions (Williams, 2013).

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Conclusion

Social Networks is a reality that we need to accept. It is the new path that the new generation will take for their communication, work, and education. Students grow up using at least one form of SN, which is now popular among digital users. Rather than resisting the definite change and the innovations in education such as integrating the SN in the educational process, parents, teachers, and advocates can start study and work on how to facilitate the safe and effective practices to the students and learners. Further studies that focus on the actual benefits of the SN and the social media in the educational process rather than searching and highlighting only the negative impact. The base of the SN is already established; all users starting from student to parents and teachers should now work on learning how to master using the SN. Finally, SN is not the real issue; it is how people use, understand, and think about the SN as an educational tool.

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