

Social Media's Impact on Learning in Higher Education

Angela Renee Smith-Faulkner

University of North Texas

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Social media has become a common communication tool used in the personal lives of teenagers and young adults to keep in touch with friends and family, socialize, and share information and opinions with others. Students use social media at home, on the go, and even sometimes in the hallways; but, should social media be used in the classroom as a learning tool? The Higher Education Research Institution found that in a typical week, 94 percent of first year college students spent time on social networking sites (Abe & Jordan, 2013). In a questionnaire for students between the ages of 20 and 23, Borstnar (2012) reported that the most common social media used by students in their personal lives included Facebook, YouTube, and forums. Yet, very few reported using Twitter, Flickr, Scribed, and LinkedIn, which are categorized as more professional social networking systems. Students also indicated in the questionnaire that they anticipated using other social media systems, (e.g., chat rooms, wikis, blogs, and interactive and animated content) in an online learning environment. With the availability of numerous types of social media and the high frequency of personal use among college students, several studies have been conducted on how the use of social media for educational purposes can impact student learning. Bumgardner and Knestis (as cited in Blazer & Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2012) found that many school districts in the U.S. are struggling with questions about the use of social media as an instructional tool; therefore, the adoption of social media for educational purposes has lagged behind the public's general usage. However, recent studies confirm that using social media has a positive effect on student learning in higher education. This paper examines why the role of social media among teens and young adults should be expanded from "recreational use" to enhancing learning in the classroom by encouraging students to

interact and engage with each other during learning activities (Berk, 2009, as cited in Abe & Jordan, 2013).

Definition, Characteristics, Examples, and Popularity of Social Media Systems

Definition of Social Media

According to Boyd and Ellison (as cited in Wiid, Cant, & Nell, 2013), social media can be defined as a 'web-based service that allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view, and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system' (p. 868). However, Castro (2012) simplified the definition by defining social media as "digital technologies that enable social interaction through a variety of forms and channels" (p.153). He also explained that the use of social media can occur through a variety of ways. People may access it from Internet browsers, applications, or mobile phones. Participation in social media provides an opening for teens and young adults to socially relate with each other in new settings that are not limited to school, home, or a fixed time (Castro, 2012). Social media technologies are often referred to as Web 2.0 and encompass a wide variety of web-based technologies. These technologies can be utilized for the purposes of promoting social, collaborative, user-driven content along with applications that help in knowledge creation through open communication and collaboration (Paily, 2013). In addition, Web 2.0 social media applications can provide a variety of tools and resources for designing and delivering instruction based on the constructivist principles of learning. For example, in a constructivist learning environment, the role of the teacher is to facilitate and guide the knowledge construction process by engaging students in meaningful learning (Paily, 2013). In that role, the teacher can utilize

Web 2.0 tools to design and provide learning activities and experiences characterized by real world examples, collaboration, cooperation, self-reflection, multiple representations of ideas, and social interaction. Web 2.0 tools (i.e., social media) provide the features necessary to develop constructivist learning activities that have been known to improve student learning outcomes.

Characteristics of Social Media

Characteristics of social media can be summarized by the five C's outlined in the study of Friedman and Friedman (2013) and published in the *Journal of Educators Online: Using social media technologies to enhance online learning*. Friedman and Friedman (2013) identified social media as having the following characteristics: communication, collaboration, creativity, community, and convergence. The first characteristic of social media focuses on communication among and between people. Friedman and Friedman (2013) stated that "communication can be one-way, two-way, multi-directional, collaborative, networked among large or small groups of people, or viral" (p.4). The rapid speed that information can be shared through social media technologies can be illustrated by recent popular videos that have gone viral. Wikipedia defines a viral video as a video that was created and becomes popular through the process of Internet sharing through video sharing websites, such as YouTube ("Viral Video," 2013, "Definition," para. 1). For example, the Wikipedia website also identified The Kony 2012 video by Invisible Children, Inc. as the most viral video in history with over 34,000,000 views on the first day of its upload and over 97,000,000 views as of April 1, 2013. Secondly, Friedman and Friedman (2013) indicated that social media encourages collaboration among its users. They designated wikis as today's collaboration tool, which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in collaboration with others. The largest collaborative online product today is Wikipedia. Brooks (2009) indicated that learning is enhanced by opportunities to collaborate with others, and that educators

should use popular social media technologies such as wikis to be more active in student learning by directly collaborating with them on class assignments and projects. The third characteristic of social media technologies, creativity, is easily accomplished through the use of social media because it naturally promotes creativity (Friedman and Friedman, 2013). There are numerous social media teaching tools that are easy to use and include features like animations, videos, wikis, blogs, web links, and webinars which encourage students to be creative. Fourth, social media technologies support a community of learners (Friedman and Friedman 2013). The idea of a community of learners is based on the premise that learning occurs as people participate and share activities with other people that have an active role in learning (Rogoff, 1994).

Communities of learners are characterized by student-to-student, teacher-to-student, and student-to-content online interactions (Friedman and Friedman, 2013). Furthermore, these interactions can occur by the use of email, phone calls, discussion boards, chats, social networking, and video conferencing. Bernard, Abrami, Borokhovski, Tamim, Surkes, and Bethel's study (as cited in Friedman and Friedman, 2013) concluded that all three types of online interactions are important and should be fully implemented in courses because they enhance student learning as well as satisfaction. Friedman and Friedman (2013) agreed that when learners have a stronger sense of community, they feel less isolated and have a greater satisfaction in their courses. The last characteristic of social media is convergence, and Friedman and Friedman (2013) defined it as the ability to adapt to new ideologies and consider this ability as the key to survival.

Furthermore, they elaborated on how technologies have converged and as a result, assumed multiple roles. For example, a person can e-mail from a phone, initiate long distance telephone calls using a broadband Internet connection, and transmit photographs by cell phones and other mobile devices. In addition, there is the convergence of user roles. For example, it is hard to

separate users, developers, distributors, producers, and consumers because today individuals take on these multiple roles comfortably (Friedman and Friedman, 2013). Communication, collaboration, creativity, community, and convergence are the five characteristics that Friedman and Friedman (2013) identified in social media technologies that should be utilized when designing lessons to enhance student online learning.

Examples of Social Media Use in the Classroom

Elmas and Geban (2012) stated that an advantage of Web 2.0 tools for the classroom is that they support a more active and participatory classroom environment. Other researchers have further refined and categorized the Web 2.0 tools based upon how the programs can be utilized in education. For example, Bohley (2010) lists seven categories that educators need to consider when determining how to implement Web 2.0 technology into the classroom. First, social bookmarking tools (e.g., Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon, and Diigo) are utilized to create a collection of social bookmarks which allows users to store and share bookmarks and also categorize them by tags of their choice. Next, collaborative word processing tools like Google docs and Zoho allow users to create, store, and share documents with others. In the category of education, Mango provides twelve different interactive language courses. Wikis allow users to create and edit web page content using any Web browser and can be used for class discussion and collaboration. PBworks is considered one of the most popular for educators with over 300,000 educational workspaces. Blogs are similar to online journaling and can be used for student journaling. Elmas and Geban (2012) also listed several more educational categories such as a content management category in which teachers can create web pages (e.g., Blackboard, Edmodo, Edublogs, Wikispaces, and Weebly) and invite students to join and participate. Online meetings with Voki, Todaysmeet, and Chatzy can be held on the Internet from any place at any

time. Interactive presentations, like Prezi, SlideRocket, and SlideShare allow users to collaborate and present in real-time. Word clouds can be made with Wordle or Tagxedo to make a visual depiction of tags that can assist content comprehension and navigation. Animation and video tools, Animoto and GoAnimate, allow users to share animated presentations with others. The last category, social networking, provides online communities of people who can share interests, build online profiles, and post information and pictures. The social networking site, Twitter, will be examined later as a tool that can be used to increase student participation and engagement.

Popularity of Social Media

According to Larson (as cited in Wiid, Cant, & Nell, 2013), the five most popular social media networking systems used today are: Facebook with 901 million users, Twitter with 555 million users, Google+ with 170 million users, LinkedIn with 150 million users and lastly, Pinterest with 11.7 million users. YouTube is the most popular video sharing site with its videos being viewed four billion times every day (eBizMBA, 2012; Waugh, 2012; New York Times, 2011, as cited in Blazer & Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2012). A recent survey, sponsored by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, found that 95 percent of teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 are online. Of these online teens, 80 percent routinely use social networking sites (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell, Zickuhr, & Rainie, 2011, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012). The National School Boards Association (2007, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012) survey of 9 through 17 year olds established that the most popular social networking activities were posting messages (41 percent); downloading music (32 percent); downloading videos (30 percent); uploading music (29 percent); updating personal websites or online profiles (25 percent); and posting photos (24 percent). In another survey, Microsoft Corporation (2010, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012) found that children typically sign up for their

first social network account by the age of 13. Surveys conducted by researchers at Children Online revealed that the number of younger children using Facebook has risen dramatically in the past two years (Fodeman & Monroe, 2011, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012). They also found that 85 percent of eighth grade students report spending time on Facebook. In addition, the percent of students using Facebook increased from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011 at each of the grade levels surveyed. The use of social media by teens and young adults for “recreational” purposes continues to increase.

Benefits of Utilizing Social Media in the Classroom

Many educators, especially at the elementary and secondary levels, are hesitant to integrate social media into classroom instruction because of risks associated with student Internet usage and the lack of control over the content that students may post. However, many advocates of the use of social media to improve student learning argue that its educational benefits outweigh the risks (Blazer & Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2012). Some of the benefits of using social networking and other social media have been reported by various researchers. First, social networking incorporates the student’s preferred learning style into instruction (Fouts, 2012; Toppo, 2011; Magid, 2010; Baird and Fisher, 2005 as cited in Blazer et al., 2012). For example, a study by Wang (2011) found Facebook as a formal educational application and a feasible platform for a cross-cultural collaboration and learning experience. The study determined that students treated Facebook as seriously as they do formal classes and in some instances increased the student’s learning motivation. Fouts et al. (2005, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012) further elaborated that the current generation has grown up with the Internet and expects to utilize technology in their learning. The active style of today’s students relies on content that is interactive and on demand like animations, demonstrations, and video instructions. In addition,

social networking provides students with immediate feedback because students can ask for help and receive feedback instantly (Goldfarb, Pregibon, Shrem, Zyko, 2011, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012). The use of social networking also enables teachers to quickly recognize students' learning needs, because social networking encourages ongoing communications. Through these communications, teachers will have plenty of student work to evaluate; therefore, teachers will know which students need additional help (Goldfarb et al., 2011, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012). Another benefit is that the use of social media enhances communication by transforming the classroom from a one-way passive communication to a two-way collaboration environment. Teachers can post classroom information and homework assignments, and students can share their viewpoints and discuss items with the teacher and with their classmates (Fouts et al., as cited in Blazer et al., 2012). Social media, as a teaching tool, has a natural collaborative characteristic and as a result, allows teachers and students to share news and resources, converse, and connect with other students within the student community. Student engagement increases with the use of social media because students are familiar with using the online programs in their daily routines, thus class activities are more exciting, energetic, and enjoyable (Friedman and Friedman, 2013). Fisher and Baird (2005) confirmed Friedman and Friedman's principle, as the results of their study revealed that the use of social technologies in an online course provided collaborative learning opportunities which gave students a greater satisfaction in their academic experience and lead to a positive influence on student retention in their online course. And finally, the use of social media prepares students for the future by helping them obtain communication and collaboration skills that they will need in the future and at the workplace (Brindley, 2012; Walsh, 2011; Young Adult Library Services Association, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2010, as cited in Blazer et al., 2012).

Characteristics of Faculty and Student Use of Social Media in Educational Experiences

In Ruleman's (2012) research findings, not only students, but faculty members were found to be active users of social media. In addition, the research found that faculty and students use numerous types of social media at various levels and for different purposes. In another study at Michigan State University that examined online teaching and learning habits of faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students, Heeter (2006, as cited in Ruleman, 2012) concluded that approximately 65 percent of both students and faculty read blogs, but faculty members were more likely to read them for personal information. In addition, the research stated that faculty members listened to podcasts for educational purposes more often than students. Yet, few faculty or students posted to blogs; however, when students posted, they tended to post for both personal and educational reasons. Ruleman's (2012) study also determined that more students than faculty used online photo sharing programs such as Flickr, but over 50 percent of both groups used it at least occasionally. One of the biggest gaps in social media use, while not a surprise, was that less than 10 percent of faculty used Facebook, while an overwhelming 70 percent of the students used Facebook. In addition, students were also much more likely to text message. Table A1 in Appendix A provides a detailed report of the weekly social media activities reported by faculty and students. Ruleman (2012) concluded that there was some tendency for faculty to be more involved in the academically oriented social media and technology such as using the library web site and RSS feeds, and students were more involved in "entertainment" media such as music, videos, games, and Facebook. Cassidy, Griffin, Manolovitz, Shen, Turney (2011, as cited in Ruleman 2012) discovered that few students used or wanted library services or information offered through Twitter or RSS feeds but had some interest in listening to a podcast if it related to their majors. Instead, around 50 percent of the students would like to use Facebook, a chat, or

instant message to ask questions, and a third of the students were interested in utilizing YouTube and library blogs (Cassidy et al., 2011, as cited in Ruleman 2012). The results of Ruleman's (2012) survey and research confirmed that both faculty and students are frequent users of some, but not all social media, and they prefer different social media technologies for personal and educational purposes.

Studies Reflecting the Positive Effects that Social Media has on Student Learning

2012 Study on the Experience of Integrating Web 2.0 Technologies

A study by Zdravkova, Ivanovic, and Putnik (2012) on the implementation of Web 2.0 concepts in several computer ethics related courses highlighted how students are active contributors who are willing to obtain, share, and contribute information through the use of social media. The study implemented social media as an alternative method to traditional e-learning activities that were utilized in previous classes. The study evaluated student workload, feedback, and observed benefits of using social media for collaborative activities such as discussion forums, wikis, and news logs. Zdravkova et al. (2012) found that students quickly adapted to the use of discussion forums, and those who were recognized as shy in face-to-face lectures participated more in online discussions. In addition, the discussions in which students participated often led into other relevant discussions that were of further interest to the students. In addition, Zdravkova et al. (2012) found the use of wikis was also accepted as a regular class activity for learning. Students who were not experienced with creating content in a wiki made some minor mistakes in the beginning, but the problems were quickly resolved when skilled creators offered explanations and guidelines on how to correct the issues. The students in the study actively participated in forums. Students in the study averaged 4.8 posts each week, which was the highest number of weekly postings per student at the institute. Student feedback also

indicated that they felt their efforts in the discussions, wikis, and forums were worthwhile because 74.19 percent of the students surveyed indicated that they were fascinated by the course and appreciated it (Zdravkova et al., 2012).

Zdravkova, Ivanovic, and Putnik (2012) discovered many benefits to substituting social media activities in the place of previous traditional e-learning activities. Some of the most important benefits were minimized plagiarism, increased socialization, mutual collaboration, increased awareness of all the newest events, immediate overview of student grades, and student satisfaction with the implementation of Web 2.0 into the course. Student feedback confirmed that students liked to participate in the creation of joint products, and that they felt that they learned more from collaborative projects than from individual essays (Zdravkova, et al., 2012).

Zdravkova et al. (2012) concluded that users in the 21st Century are no longer passive consumers; instead, they are active contributors willing to obtain, share and evolve information.

Zdravkova et al. (2012) stated “although the class was very demanding at times, the student results along with their encouraging feedback proved that students were learning more and more and complaining less and less” (p. 363). This research also denoted related works and similar conclusions from similar studies. For example, the 2008 study by Itamar, Bregman, Isreal, and Korman (as cited in Zdravkova et al., 2012) concluded that increasing the level of interaction between students was a motivating factor for students, and the achievements of teams were most likely to be higher than those achieved by individuals. Wee and Abrizah (as cited in Zdravkova, et al., 2012) concluded in a 2011 study that the student experience of using wikis and discussion forums could generously support learning and collaboration. They went on to say, the use of social tools (e.g., instant messaging, forums, and chats) allowed students to share capabilities and knowledge, bringing a synergetic effect to learning. Since this research and other related

research provided many advantages of using social media in a learning environment, Zdravkova et al. (2012) has requested for educators to encourage students to use new technologies in their learning activities and for educators to try to use Web 2.0 elements in their lessons.

2011 Study on Using Twitter in Higher Education

A semester long study conducted by Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2011) examined the use of social media by students and instructors, and the impact of social media use on student learning and engagement. The purpose of the study was to examine the association between educationally relevant social media use and student engagement because research indicates that there are strong links between engagement and student success (Pascarella and Terenzini; 2005; Kuh 2009, as cited in Junco et al., 2011). Because of the popularity of social media with college students, these technologies have attracted the interest of faculty looking for ways to engage and motivate students to be more active in their learning (Hughes, 2009 as cited in Junco et al., 2011). Social networking is a popular category of social media with young adults. Social networking websites such as Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter have become a weekly routine of college students' lives. While Facebook has been the most popular social networking site for college students, Grosseek and Holotescu (2009, as cited in Junco et al., 2011) concluded that educators have been more willing to try to integrate Twitter as part of the learning process because of its ongoing, public dialogue capability. The study conducted by Junco, et al. (2011) consisted of a total of 125 undergraduate students. Seventy students were in the experimental group and fifty-five in the controlled group. The study consisted of two classes of pre-health professional majors. The experimental group utilized Twitter for academic discussions and assignments, and the controlled group did not. The purpose of the study was to answer two questions. First, does encouraging the use of Twitter for educational relevant purposes have an

increase in student engagement? And second, does the use of Twitter have an effect on semester grades? The study began with the experimental group receiving an hour of training on the basics of Twitter including, how to send tweets, use hashtags, and send @ replies. Then, all students were asked to send an introductory tweet and follow the class account along with other students in the class. Throughout the semester class, Twitter was used continuously for class discussions, book discussions, class reminders, campus event reminders, and academic and personal support (Junco et al., 2011). In addition, Twitter was used to connect students with each other and the instructor, organize learning projects and study groups, complete assignments, and provide students with a low-stress way to ask questions. By the end of the semester, instructors had sent 301 tweets from the class account (Junco et al., 2011). Of those 301 tweets, 89 were replies to students, and 18 were retweets. Furthermore, the research revealed that the experimental group of students had significantly higher scores on engagement and had significantly higher semester grade point averages (GPA's) (Junco et al., 2011). An investigation of GPA's from high school indicated that there were no significant differences in the two groups prior to the study (Junco et al., 2011). In examining the Twitter activities, Junco et al. (2011) found three specific positive outcomes of using Twitter. Twitter produced a more rich discussion of student's relationship to themes covered in the book study than would have been possible during the limited traditional class time. Second, the instructor noted that students also engaged in a great deal more cross communication about the book than first year students typically do during class sessions. Third, students built strong relationships across diverse groups. At this college, this was considered unusual for first year students (Junco et al., 2011).

The use of Twitter in class activities incorporated Chickering and Gamson's (1987, as cited in Junco, Heiberger, and Loken, 2011) seven principals for good practice in undergraduate

education. The seven principles include: encouraging student and faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations, and respecting diversity. Based on the study by Chickering and Gamson (1987, as cited in Junco et al., 2011), the main premise was that implementing the seven principles will increase student engagement and that increased student engagement in educational activities will result in positive student outcomes. The study conducted by Junco et al. (2011) concluded that the use of Twitter for educational purposes increased the engagement of students and faculty as well as resulting in higher semester grade point averages. The study provided evidence that social media can be used as an educational tool to increase student engagement and help students reach positive learning outcomes (Junco et al., 2011).

Student Perceptions of Using Social Media for Learning

Two studies are highlighted that reveal student perceptions of using social media for learning. First, Hrastinski and Aghae (2012) interviewed twenty students and found seven methods of how students perceive they use social media to support their studies. Students mentioned that e-mail, instant messaging, and sharing documents were the top social media tools utilized to support their learning. Next, students indicated connecting through programs like Facebook and student-teacher communication tools along with wiki reading were utilized. Finally, video watching and project collaboration were mentioned. The study did not reflect the actual usage of social media in their courses, but may indicate students need more support and training on how to take advantage of using social media to support their learning even though they are proficient in using it for personal purposes (Hrastinski & Aghae, 2012).

Second, research by Wiid, Cant, & Nell (2013) revealed the students' perceptions of using social media networking systems as an educational tool while they attended an open distance

learning higher education institution. The study utilized the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to measure five student perceptions of the use of social media for learning. Davis (1993, as cited in Wiid, et al., 2013) described the five classifications of student perceptions that the study measured. The first classification, perceived usefulness, measures the degree in which a student believes social media would enhance their academic performance. The second classification, perceived ease, measures the degree in which a student believes the use of social media would be free from effort. The third classification, attitude towards using, measures the degree of evaluative effect that a student associates with using social media in his or her class. Finally, intention to use, determines if students want to use social media, and system accessibility determines if students have access to the technologies (Wiid, et al., 2013). The purpose of the study was to determine the students' perception on the effectiveness of using social media as a lecturing tool. The research identified the top six social media networking tools as: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube (Wiid, et al., 2013). Adamson (2012, as cited in Wiid, et al., 2013) states that both students and some lecturers are familiar with the popular social media networking systems, so both should take advantage of using social media for communication, learning, and collaboration, as well as sharing ideas and interest. However, Adamson (2012, as cited in Wiid et al., 2013) also cautions that the lecturer and student must first be educated on the functions and benefits of social media before the use of it will be effective. Most students who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that use of social media as a learning tool would be easy (Wiid et al., 2013). In the area of perceived usefulness, most students agreed with the five questions on the survey, with the most agreed upon statement being 'I found social media systems useful' (p.874). In the area of attitude towards using social media, the most agreed upon statement was 'Using social media systems is

not a foolish idea' (p.875). Students also mostly agreed upon the statement, 'I intend to use social networking for communicating with others', and 'I have no difficulty accessing and using an e-learning system' (p.876).

The overall findings of the study confirm earlier research by (Shen, Laffey, Lin, and Huang (2006, as cited in Wiid, Cant, & Nell, 2013) which concluded that using social media networking systems for online learning have become a very common educational format to use by higher education institutions and their students around the world because of its flexibility of time and place. Social media networking systems have the ability to enable faculty and students to collaborate and share information at any time convenient to them and from any place in the world (Adamson, 2012 as cited in Wiid et al., 2013). Students perceive the effectiveness of these technologies as a lecturing tool as easy to use and accessible (Wiid et al., 2013). Students clearly indicated that using social media was not considered a foolish idea, and they would like to use it to communicate with fellow students and lecturers (Wiid et al., 2013).

Challenges to Utilizing Social Media to Improve Learning in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Recent studies have provided evidence that social media can be utilized in higher education to improve student learning. However, many educators in elementary and secondary education limit the use of social media technologies in school because they fear students will be exposed to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, or inappropriate adult interactions (Blazer & Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2012). Other fears expressed by Blazer et al. (2012) include that educators fear students might share passwords with friends which could place them at risk of compromising their online safety. Blazer et al. (2012) continued by explaining others believe that

students might be tricked into sharing their identity, phone number, or address with strangers online. In addition, educators are concerned young adults do not understand that the pictures and information they post online are public and can still be accessed if deleted (Blazer et al., 2012). Finally, Blazer et al. (2012) stated educators feel that face-to-face interactions and communications are important real world skills, and social networking discourages learning such important social skills. And still others think that social media technologies have a negative impact on learning because they cause distractions from school work (Blazer et al., 2012).

Blazer and Miami-Dade County Public Schools (2012) recommends the following to overcome educator fears of using social media as an educational tool. First, educate the school community about responsible Internet usage, and teach students that cyberbullying is unacceptable. Next, ensure that the district is adhering to federal guidelines (e.g., Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and The 2008 Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act) governing student Internet usage. Start a pilot program by selecting a group of students to utilize social media or social networking in the classroom. In addition, school districts should utilize filtering software that blocks access to unacceptable websites, and teachers should monitor the students' social media usage. Also, consider using education-based social networking sites created so teachers have greater control and monitoring capabilities of these sites. And finally, provide quality teacher training on how to use social media to engage students in relevant educational activities (Blazer et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, many educators are not convinced the use of social media in the school environment can improve student learning. However, the 2010 National Education Technology Plan encouraged educators to consider trying to use social media and other Web 2.0 technologies to expand communication and collaborative learning environments (Blazer, et al., 2012). In

addition, programs like Connected Educator Month (CEM), which raise awareness of and engagement in learning and collaboration through communities and networks, can help educators understand the importance of utilizing social media as a learning tool. For example, this year's event will have a special emphasis on helping districts promote and integrate online social learning as a formal professional development method. Once educators feel comfortable utilizing social media for their own professional development, hopefully, they will overcome the challenges and fears of using social media as a learning tool in elementary and secondary schools.

Conclusion and Future Use of Social Media

Recent studies confirm that using social media has a positive effect on student learning in higher education. As a result, it is necessary to overcome the resistance of utilizing social media in higher education and to complete more studies on how to overcome the challenges and risks of utilizing social media in elementary and secondary education. Howard Rheingold, teacher of Virtual Communities and Social Media at Stanford University and the University of California-Berkeley, comments that the use of social media provides greater student engagement and greater student interest while also allowing students to take more control and more responsibility of their education (Blankenship, 2010). In addition, Rheingold states, "no matter what we think of social media they aren't going away, and we need to accept that and start empowering ourselves to use social media as well" (p. 3). Freeman & Freeman (2013) concluded that educators who wish to increase their value to their institutions must embrace the technologies that their students are already using in their personal lives and reluctant educators need to overcome the challenges and fears of utilizing social media as an educational tool. They also warn that educators who refuse to adapt will soon find themselves obsolete. Social media

networking systems are important tools for learning and should be used more extensively for this purpose (Wiid, Cant, & Nell, 2013).

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Appendix A
The Characteristics of Students and Faculty Use of Social Media

Table A1
Comparison of Social Technology Usage: Weekly or More Often

	Faculty %	Students %
Text message	59.8	92.6
Play games on console	9.8	27.7
Play handheld games	7.4	6.8
Download music/video	20.3	39.2
Listen to Podcast	15.8	13.9
Post to a blog	11.5	13.3
Comment on a blog	12.1	15.7
Read a blog	32.2	31.4
Edit Wikipedia article	3.3	2.0
Read Wikipedia article	33.2	36.5
Receive search alerts (RSS)	22.2	11.7
Use college library web site	61.5	42.0
Use social bookmarking	11.4	15.8
Use Flickr/online photo sharing	7.3	12.4

Source: Booth (2009) as cited in Ruleman (2012)