

Digital Learning: A study on the E-learning & Social Media Tools in Improving the Teaching and Learning Environment of Adult Learners

Jaya Prasanna¹, G. SriPradha², Dr. P.Kumar agurudasan³

¹*Asst. Professor, Department of Computer Science,*

S. Narayanaswami college of Arts and science, Navalur, Chennai 603103

²*Research Scholar, State Resource Centre, Adyar, University of Madras, Chennai –600005*

³*Research Fellow, State Resource Centre, Adyar, Chennai-600020*

Abstract- In a knowledge- based society, information and communication technology (ICT) tools, has been used to improve the quality of education and training. Thus, in order to improve the quality of education and training, Interactive approaches such as E-learning solutions and Social Media are widely used in ICT learning solutions, either as platforms or as an interactive content that can be accessed on premise by the receivers of the educational product. This paper, aims to conduct an analysis with regard to the way, how from E-learning to Social Media can improve the quality of adult education. This paper will analyze the recent tools in E- learning and how the Inclusion of tools that are based more on Social Media influence the learning outcomes. Based on these aspects the authors will identify the aspects that could significantly improve certain E-learning technologies or learning techniques that imply the usage of ICT to reach their desired quality level of education.

Keywords: ICT, Social Media, E-Learning, adult education, learning tools.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is an increased use of information and communication technologies in adult learning. This is mainly due to three reasons: ICT has the capacity to enhance learning; it can widen access to learning opportunities; and while using ICT in adult education, the learner also acquires digital skills which are pivotal for living and working in today's society.

According to the recent research, approximately 95% of people use social media regularly. To understand how social media is changing adult education, all you have to do is take a look at your phone, tablet or computer. You are linked to at least two or more social media gateways most of the times which enable you to stay in constant touch with the people around you[1]. Not just with family and friends, these social media also help us to communicate with our colleagues & academicians as well. This helps in both formal and informal conversation to take place at different levels. That paves a way for these social media to be a part & parcel of our lives these days. With just few clicks, the world has been made very small. Taking into consideration, the recent growths in social media this paper will summarize the use of social media and E-learning in Adult Education; how current adult education and learning is influenced by E-Learning and Social Media and how Social Media is used in different educational fields to get best results[2].

II. INFLUENCE OF ICT AND E-LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION

E-learning is the practice of providing education with the help of modern technology and it is commonly referred to the intentional use of computer networked ICT in teaching and learning processes. Transfer of the digital content is the main distinctive feature of E-learning. The interesting part of e-learning is not only the content and tools, which are used for teaching but also the environment in which the learner get their training. E-learning is nowadays a very common term not only among the academics and students but among the people of all disciplines. E-learning has been witnessing an unprecedented expansion in higher and tertiary education. In addition, lifelong learning is a key factor for professional personal and social success of adults in tomorrow's society. E-learning is used as an effective training tool and it makes the education process a fun. Technology plays a vital role in bringing this change and major hi-tech modernizations can result in entire pattern modifications[3].

Thus, E- learning as a whole has known improvements and is now mostly based on education through the use of internet-based platforms like Moodle or Blackboard, and through the usage of computer assisted learning in universities and high schools. As such the implementation and usage of e-learning platforms and the usage of ICT

based learning has had a great impact on the ease of access to information for students, either being used as a means to provide additional information that cannot be covered in class.

As such, the manner in which information is distributed from instructors to students has a greater impact if they also interact when they are not necessarily present in class. The rate of which information is being transferred towards the students and the efficiency of how social media impacts the efficiency of transferring this information from instructor to students is highly dependent on the following aspects:

2.1 The digital literacy and social skills of instructors

The amount of information and the quality of such information that is related to the courses that students take part of is dependent on how skilled the instructor is in making that information accessible above the restrictions of prescribed education. Also, if the Instructors lack in digital literacy, as most adults do in Europe, information that could be transferred towards the students in a more interactive and appealing manner will be reduced in both quality and quantity.

2.2 The digital literacy and social skills of students

As with the case of the instructors, the amount and quantity of information that can be accessed by students also suffers from the skills and competences that the students have in the domain of ICT and social skills. Thus if the information is clearly made available by the instructors in an appealing manner but the receiving end of the educational process lacks the required skills and competences to access it then the learning process will be faulty.

2.3 The quality of the platforms used

This aspect refers to the tool that the instructors decide to use in order to socially interact with their students as to better improve the communication between them and the manner through which the information is transferred, thus the instructors will have to find a social platform or a social media application that can facilitate the transfer of information and the quality of interaction required so as to provide a fast and efficient manner of learning[4].

2.4 The quantity of information

This aspect refers to the fact that social media should have a ratio between the quantity of information that reaches the students and the quality of this information. Due to the social interaction aspect that social media generally has, trying to facilitate the transfer of a big amount of information towards the students through such instruments differs in impact. Thus using social media in classrooms in order to improve the participation and interaction of students and in order to make the process of learning more appealing to newer generations, the quantity of information can be as high as classical means of education, but if instructors would use the same amount of information on a social media platform where interactions are more related to social aspects than educational aspect of the people interested in learning, then the amount of information that actually manages to reach the students will be lower of that in class[5]. The following table compares the various pros and cons of E-Learning and social media in Adult education

Table 1. E-learning platforms vs. Social Media platforms

E-Learning platform		Social Media platform	
Advantages	Disadvantages	Advantages	Disadvantages
Cost efficient	Static	Cost efficient	Doubtful information
Accessible	Impersonal	Accessible	Distracting social interaction
Ease of use	Lack of social interactions	Engaging	
Can be linked to formal education		Appealing	Informal or non-formal education
Content updated by professionals		Quantity of users	Content driven by users

III. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media refers to a set of web-based tools used for a wide range of applications (Lee, McLaughlin, 2010). Social media is considered as a resources that accentuate vigorous contribution, connectivity, association, as well as sharing of knowledge and ideas among users. Various types of social media tools and facilities are used for various drives.

Liu (2010) mentions some of the social media websites: Face book, Wiki, YouTube, Bulletin Board, LinkedIn, Blogs, Twitter, Podcasts, Virtual Worlds, RSS, StumbleUpon, Netlog, Delicious, Digg, Plurk, and Jaiku.

Social networking helps for entertaining and to be in touch with friends, the social networking embraces portals like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter which permit publishing both personal and professional information to our near and

dear. Wiki is used for creating content collaboratively. Blogs are used for individual views and reflections, and social bookmarking used to publish, unify, stock, achieve and hunt bookmarks of resources. The main rewards of these tools are their skill to permit people to generate and share content and don't restrict users for only accessing and retrieving the content. Moreover, these platforms could be used for informative purposes to share queries and keys among community members that are searching for precise material.

One of the most significant social media websites is Facebook due to its messaging and collaborative features, and to the original emphasis and focus on the academic market. The access of this site is available after simple registration. In Facebook one can mark comments, URLs, pictures, videos and other files. Any user can also post a comment to the published content. With the help of its calendar feature, even we can mark various life time events of us and get reminders of our friends and family as well. Moreover, this tool can be used to recognize target group or diagnosis of needs through posting surveys or creating discussion. Opportunity to make and accomplish a group should be used for the purpose of e-learning process. All these can be done by maintaining proper privacy settings so that data is secured from malicious people.

YouTube which is an open access platform has got many videos related to their studies. Employing this facility doesn't incur cost and links learners to wider societies of people with alike interests. This also improves in collaborative learning and encourages team building. Wiki is another portal which permits data sharing through building a knowledge database on any topics by interlinking various websites together. It also allows editing the interlinked pages. Many educational organizations have employed the Wiki portal system to support their learners to work as a group in order to construe manuscripts, to write their articles and papers, to progress their study and communication skills and to share thoughts collectively (Liu,2010).

IV. FEATURES OF SOCIALMEDIA

Social media are rapidly becoming a part of our day to day life. So the advantages of social media listed below will justify the reason for using them in Adulteducation.

Flexibility

Social media doesn't have any restricted timing. The learners can also learn from any resource and any point of time irrespective of their location. It also allows the instructors to clear students doubt as and when required, thereby reducing the waiting time of the students.

Motivatingteamwork

Not just individuals gain from social media. We can form groups of learners and exchange ideas among each other, thereby increasing the team understanding.

Involving learners in finding and sharingresources

With the increase in the usage of Internet, we not only involve students to read the existing contents of the given syllabi but also assign them to gather further information on the content thereby involving them in finding and sharing their additional information

V. SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADULTEDUCATION

Since social media can be so advantageous, we can actually use them in adult education in order to get best out of it.

5.1 Groupchats

A teacher can now create a group for every class and share the learning material, reminders, document links, etc. so that all the students are benefitted by the social media in a positive way. Teaching and learning can happen in the same platform.

5.2 Sendingtweets

Tweeting is a great way to connect learners to the real world. By using hashtags teachers can put all the content in a simple post and send it across for the benefit of the students.

5.3 Keeping and collating educationalresources

Many portals allow sharing educational content in a collaborative manner.

Pinterest is a best example for the above resource sharing.

5.4 Using personalblogs

Some instructors can also create separate blog for each of the learner. By doing the learners will have their own space to upload their notes, assignments & videos which ever is applicable. This increases sharable resources aswell.

5.5 *Sharing photos*

Since 'a picture is worth a thousand words', platforms like Instagram can be extremely valuable, enabling students to demonstrate their work in an alternative format to written work, such as in adult vocational programs.

5.6 *Recording and posting videos*

This is almost certainly the most labor-intensive of all the things educators can do with social media but it offers many advantages. Educators can record lessons for students to watch at their convenience, keeping classroom time for discussion. And learners who find it easier to communicate verbally rather than in writing may find using videos inspiring. For instance, learners can film themselves undertaking tasks. Videos can be posted on YouTube or any other social platform. Now a days the concept of Go Live is also getting popular wherein guest lectures and other events can be broadcasted live which can be viewed online by those who can't attend in person.

VI. CONCLUSION

As social interactions through the use of ICT become more and more present in everyday chores, and as ICT is starting to be used in more and more fields, from education to economy, from medical use to smart cities, the need for digital skills and literacy will grow. As we move towards an advanced digital era, the adult learners will gradually move towards this life changing education system. Thus, adult education will have to make use of every aspect that makes lifelong learning appealing towards adults in order to improve the quality of educational services provided and to train and educate adults in non-formal and informal. Manners in order to help them adapt to the evolving needs of society where skills and competences that are not always obtained through formal means are more and more required. The use of social media in adult education has undeniable positive effects and even being controversial in some ways it has vast opportunities to be used in adult education changing it towards their improvement.

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