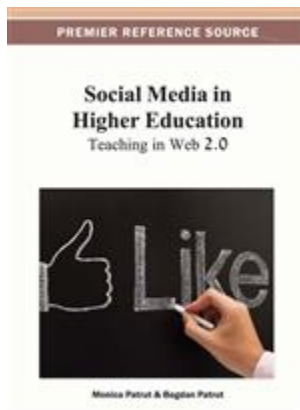


## Social Media in Higher Education: Teaching in Web 2.0

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© IGI 2013, 474 pages

ISBN13: 9781466629707

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2970-7

book has 474 pages.

With the emergence/increased use of social media tools, a large number of higher education institutions are embracing this new ecology of information offered by social media. More and more colleges and universities from all over the world are transitioning from traditional teaching/learning towards social media teaching/learning, widening their curriculum landscape beyond technology by integrating different forms of social media, like social networks, microblogs, or cloud computing. However, in this era of fundamental changes in education brought by virtual worlds and augmented reality, dominated by mobile devices and applications, it is necessary to rethink the academic work environments based on social media tools and applications like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, in accordance with the learning needs, skills, and competencies of students.

Thus, as the title suggests, this book provides a framework in which diverse scholars explore different issues of using social media in education, in general, with a focus on the academic environments, both from the perspectives of educational actors and institutions.

The 19 chapters of the book document the many distinct aspects in which higher education actors perceive and use social media, trying to find out the answers to questions such as:

- How do faculty members use social media like Facebook, Twitter, or document sharing tools as reflective and collaborative teaching and learning tools, also for research and professional development? (See Chapters 5, 10, 12)

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- Could social media be a main communication/collaboration/sharing channel in the Aula? Or, regarding power, teaching, and assessment, does it rank low among other online applications? (See Chapters 4, 14)
- Do we know which social media tools/applications are the most used by our students as learning media? Can Twitter or Facebook be regarded and used as effective and efficient educational tools? If yes, in what way(s)? (Chapters 5,12,13)
- Which are the most popular social media tools within teachers' communities? (Chapters 8, 19). And how are they used (with an emphasis on Web 2.0 teaching strategies in the case of gender studies)? (Chapter 3)
- What are the main ideas that should be considered when elaborating software systems for the communication's streamlining and diversification between the actors of a learning system? (Chapter 11)
- Today's students are tomorrow's knowledge workers. More importantly, employees have to take over responsibility for their own personal development. Such as: What skills and competencies are needed for students' future careers, to become highly educated citizens? (Chapters 2,6,7,8,9) What are the trends in the development of cross-curricular writing skills in their curriculum? (Chapter 10)
- It is well known that young people, particularly the Generation Y'ers, are expected to possess extensive social media skills, need to know how they can use social media in a business context to ensure their personal development and be successful in their jobs. Thus: What role does the educator play in his own developmental learning of the tools of the trade? How does this inform his preparations for the learners' experiences? (Chapters 2, 7)
  - Which are the potential benefits, challenges, and disadvantages in using social media in universities? Are there special policies? (Chapters 13, 17)
  - How can social networks provide access to remote students, in a country with very long distances between rural and urban zones? (Chapter 13)
  - Which is the bad and the ugly side of information age? Which is the role of the parental education? (Chapter 16), etc.

The international perspective of 31 contributing authors focuses on conceptual and on practical issues as well as, presenting a diverse set of viewpoints on the trends and issues of social media theory, research and practice in higher education (like publishing projects in which students can participate from the University of Augsburg or examples that demonstrate the positive effects of students' participation in such projects on the development of media literacies from Romania, Germany, Australia, or Spain).

Social media have evolved from an entertainment tool to a marketing tool, and nowadays they have become a widespread pedagogical tool. The case studies presented in the book cover the use of emerging such technologies in higher education research, teaching, and policy, emphasizing the increasing interest in training, in emerging technologies for educators and affiliated university staff. It is also shown that the

contemporary educational process is greatly affected by two innovative phenomena: social media and personal identity online (Chapter 6). More importantly, different models of e-learning are analyzed, such as University 2.0 (Chapter 1) - a framework that supports, by advanced Web 2.0 tools, the teaching and the research in the university.

The broader perspective within which these ideas are debated is represented by the context that is created through the inception of what in the specialized literature is called mobile social media (as a problematic universe) and mobile Web 2.0 (as a fundamental technological ubiquitous universe). In Chapter 18, the most relevant theoretical frameworks in the field of Mobile Learning are provided, especially when linked to social learning and the nature of the 21st century learners. An overview is offered of the most outstanding features concerning the pedagogical challenges that social media may imply for the Higher Education stakeholders, and the chapter poses some questions on the challenges that educational institutions have to face.

Although social media redefine the relation between technology and education, using it in academic courses does not represent an easy teaching/training/researching and learning method. It implies a sum of efforts, and especially knowledge of these technologies, with both advantages and limits. As such, in this volume, one can find not only highlights of rigorous and critical theories and paradigms but also best practices and findings of researches, carried out by scholars engaged in teaching with social media in higher education from all over the world. However, the authors herein stressed and underlined just a small landscape/picture of what social media represent for academia.

More importantly, this book can serve as a(n) (in)valuable/reliable pedagogical (re)source for academic actors: students, teachers, researchers, and practitioners.