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Social Media in the Classroom

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As a professor, I am caught in the midst of a revolutionary period in education and technology. Education has had a slow building relationship with technology and has even had a love-hate relationship with the use of social media, despite its impenetrable growing prevalence in our lives. For younger generations, social media has gone from phenomenon to cultural norm, and the debate regarding whether or not to integrate social media into the classroom becomes more relevant. Social media is a Pandora's box of opportune connection, knowledge and dangerous pitfall. Though you can live without it, living with it in the digital age puts you among the same pace with the rest of the world. It holds everything that the modern world relies on for information, culture, entertainment and social activity.

Aside from the obvious risks of using social media, like distractions and negative digital spaces, I have always been a vocal advocate for using social media in the classroom. As classrooms are going more digital and even more online courses are being taught, I believe that social media becoming a necessary tool to enhance student engagement, teaching methodology and learning development. I can share social media news that is relevant to the class materials or have students find relevant materials from social media which are pertinent to the content of the class. This can be done intentionally in the classroom, but unintentionally, it occurs rather frequently. This is due to the fact that students are already on social media and are sharing, following and seeking information which may help them in their studies. Social media is used by students for their assignments, for support, and for information. Since the students are already on social media, at times it is important to meet them where they are.

We only have to look briefly at the major paradigm shift in education as a whole. Social media

and technology have become the primary tool for personal education in the past decade, yet when you examine the educational and academic landscape, the archetypical classroom setting with a student listening to the teacher's lecture has not changed all that much. The conventional antics in education are as always, a far step behind.

Students now are gravitating towards learning digitally, where the preference to engage in information and material at an autonomous pace and in a self-directed manner becomes a greater expectation. Younger generations have grown up learning in such a manner, and its elevated efficiency leads me to believe that it's not the students that need to adapt to educators, but rather the educators that need to adapt to them. Students today can and should expect to learn anywhere they are any time they want; they should be able to have the option to have a diverse learning source, not just the formal teacher and peer, but the global environment of classrooms filled with other teachers and peers. This fosters the opportunity for energetic co-learning and co-creation, inciting more dissemination of information for a democratic audience in a digital space. This is one of the greatest values of social media: its openness and interactiveness. It breaks down the walls between student and educator, allowing for all to be both simultaneously.

We cannot slow down the consumption of information online, nor can we slow down how it is disrupting the traditions of education. As a result, rather than being the owner of knowledge I feel my responsibility adjusting towards being a facilitator and guider of knowledge. When I post on social media, I feel as though it is a conscious act of preparing my students to understand how to use social media as an educational, positive and professional tool in the modern climate. Information can quickly be disseminated on social media as the classroom goes beyond the walls of a classroom. Furthermore, it allows my students the chance to send me questions, while also keeping them informed and updated on what is occurring in the classroom. This unique avenue generates new forms of engagement that I would not otherwise establish in the typical classroom setting.

The future of education will not be limited to physical spaces and classroom doors. Students and non-students alike should be able to learn in relation to updated current technology that allows for learning without bounds. As educators and students, we need to welcome this philosophy and utilize social media for a progressive education and a right step towards the future.

You can follow Grace Ji-Sun Kim on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

<https://wabash.center/2020/03/social-media-in-the-classroom/>