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## Profiles of Secondary School Students' Use of Social Media and their Views about its Outcomes to Learning

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore profiles of secondary school students' use of social media and determine their views about its outcomes to learning. This research was based on phenomenological approach. The participants were determined by maximum variation sampling which is a type of purposeful sampling. The work group consisted of fourteen secondary school students. The data were gathered by standardized open-ended interviews. The data were analysed by content analysis technique. The data showed that social media was referred to as a source of surfing for information both for school issues and personal interests. The way students used the social media included both risks and opportunities. The data implied that social media provided students with a fertile setting to socialize interact and express self ideas and emotions. It supports learning indirectly through strengthening communicative and language skills and increasing the power of perception that leads to a better comprehension. Statements of the participants explored that those social media content occupied students with their own learning history. Consequently, we should keep in mind that it is the users' ability, awareness, competence and creativity that will make social media valuable and meaningful.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Social Network, Web 2.0, Education, Formal Learning, Informal Learning, Social Networking

## Introduction

The potential of social network sites by means of educational operations has not fully been understood and considered in both formal and informal education. We should keep in mind that it is the users' ability, awareness, competence and creativity which will make social media valuable and meaningful. Hill and Hannafin (2001) claim that the role of educational resources has undergone a metamorphosis during recent years. They asserted that dominant educational perspective in the pre-digital age reflected an industrial model of production. Accordingly, learning has been managed in controlled environments, with information divided into specific topics. Students demonstrate what they have learned from textbooks or teachers by passing tests and meeting performance criteria. Ideas were largely fixed and represented in a static fashion. The metamorphosis has been propelled by the exponential growth of information systems such as the internet, the World Wide Web and the ubiquitous presence of enabling technologies in classrooms, libraries, homes, businesses, and communities.

As Hall (2009) expresses Web offers ways for users to personalise their online existence, and to develop their own critical identities. User centred, participative, social networking tools enable learners to create informal associations or communities of practice, in which to develop their own subject-based mastery. Moreover, they are able to define who they share those experiences with, and to connect their informal educational lives to their formal, institutional work. In this sense, the more students develop media literacy the better they learn to learn. Media literacy is a term used by a growing number of scholars and educators to refer to the process of critically analyzing, learning and exchanging to create one's own messages in print, audio, video and multimedia, including real-time interactive exploration through the global internet (Buckingham, 2003; Brown, 1998; Hobbs, 1998). Potter (2005) states that "we build our perspectives from knowledge structures. To build our knowledge structures, we need tools and raw material. These tools are our skills. The raw material is information from the media and from the real world."

## Social Media and Social Networks

Internet can be seen as a big leap in terms of communication technologies for not only minimizing distances but also keeping people in touch. Knight and Smith (2006) states that what makes the internet a more powerful platform for social networking is the ability to build social networking tools upon it. The internet provides a layer of communication capabilities that can be utilized by several different tools. Smith (2009) claims that over the last few years the Web has fundamentally shifted towards user-driven technologies such as blogs, social networks and video-sharing platforms. Collectively these social technologies, now uniformly tagged as social media, have enabled a revolution in user-generated content and the publishing of consumer opinion. Social media is called "social" because it enables communication, facilitate social interaction and make possible collaboration, allows the creation and exchange the generated content (Bryer and Zavatarro, 2011; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; King, 2012; O'Reilly, 2007).

It has been asserted that Web 2.0, read-write Web and the social web have been used interchangeably and both are used with the meaning of facilitating a more social connection and actively engage learners, individually as well as collaboratively (Anderson, 2007; Buus, 2012; Minocha, 2009; Erzurum, 2011). Murray (2008) refers to Web 2.0 as messaging (instant web-

based messaging), chat (real time text-based interaction), discussion groups (delayed text-based interaction), wikis (modifiable collaborative web pages), podcasting (subscription-based broadcast over the web), vodcasting (video podcasts broadcast over the web), linkedin, skype, plaxo plus and facebook myspace, facebook. O'Reilly (2007) refers to Web 2.0 specifically as google adsense, flickr, bittorrent, napster, wikipedia, blogging, upcoming.org and evdb, search engine optimization, cost per click, web services, participation, wikis, tagging (folksonomy) and syndication. Erzurum (2011) express that the concept of social media refers to platforms such as social networks, blogs, micro-blogs and forums where self-generated contents of users are shared by the user like a publisher. Asur and Huberman (2010) point out that social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at a prodigious rate. Examples include Facebook, MySpace, Digg, Twitter and JISC listservs on the academic side. Because of its ease of use, speed and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry. Bray (2012) states that the reality of the situation is that pretty much the whole of the Web has now turned social and most new content that is published online allows for social interaction. This might include comments, the ability to edit a page or a personal recommendation such as 'liking' on Facebook. Knight and Smith (2006) states with respect to social networking that these sites allow for social networks to form through the use of personal profiles. Users post information about themselves such as education information, favourites, music, links, etc. Users also become friends with other users similar to the buddy list mentioned in the IM section. On Facebook this buddy list is organized by what school or network a friend is affiliated. Friends can write to each other via messages or something called "walls." "Walls" are viewable comments/messages that are posted directly on a user's profile page. So, social network websites allow users to join groups which contain users that share an interest. Users can then post announcements and "wall" posts on the group page for other members to view. Facebook has something unique in that allows for events to be created. Events allow users to invite other users to their event and post announcements and information about the event on its corresponding page.

### **An Overview to Social Media from Educational Point of View**

As Abdelraheem (2013) stated well that the process of teaching and learning has always been fertile ground for early adopters of innovation in computing technology. It is, therefore, no surprise that educational practitioners and theorists have begun to eagerly explore how social media can be harnessed to describe and implement new paradigms for communication, learning and education. Shen and Eder (2009) asserted that the Web is rapidly becoming popular as a place to conduct meetings, teach or take a class, interact virtually with others, or just socialize online. Silius, Kailanto and Tervakari (2011) express that social media enhanced learning systems allow students to participate in educational online communities by creating, manipulating and sharing content online, communicating and exchanging opinions, connecting with each other, establishing social networks and creating communities for different needs. In community groups students can collaboratively chat, write news, manage events, write blogs, posts and edit wiki pages and share resources (files, images, videos etc.). Chen and Bryer (2012) assert that uses of social media provide engaging channels to facilitate student-student, student-instructor and

student-content interactions in multimedia formats. This environment of involvement and creation potentially allows users to become more engaged in the learning process and it entices users to collaborate on projects in real-world situations. Social media technologies that allow students to connect to educational contexts in new and meaningful ways beyond the traditional classroom environment have the potential to blur the line between formal and informal learning. Moreover, Crockett (2005) emphasizes on that through creating their own media, students experience firsthand the process of deciding what should be included and/or excluded from their media texts. It also helps them to understand the languages and technological aspects of the different media forms. Hall (2009) addresses that the read/write Web, or Web 2.0, enables learners to integrate their own contexts, profiles and content, in order to develop informal associations or communities of inquiry. Within educational contexts these tools enable spaces for learners to extend their own formal learning into more informal places though the fusion of web-based tools into a task-oriented personal learning environment. Where students are empowered to make decisions about the tools that support their personal approaches to learning, they are able develop further control over their learning experiences and move towards their own subject-based mastery. Critically, they are able to define with whom to share their personal approaches, and how they can best connect the informal learning that occurs across their life to their formal, academic work. The personal definition or fusion of tools and tasks is afforded through individual control over the learning environment. The flowering of personal learning aims, mediated by technologies and rules of engagement, occurs within task-specific loops where learners can interpret and process epistemological signals. In turn, where those loops are located within broader, personalised environments students can make contextual sense of their learning and extend their own educational opportunities. Moreover, they can extend their own academic decision-making through application in other contexts, and as a result manage their own academic uncertainties.

Coombs, Leite and Grierson (2010) report that Web 2.0 technologies provide ways to foster this type of community-building, both in and out of the classroom. Classroom blogs and wikis are intrinsically democratic spaces where power structures are minimized and our students have opportunities to share their voices. Students need to be able to feel they are supported, that the teacher feels invested in their learning and that dialogue can take place. Online social networking provides a unique opportunity to build such relationships and reinforce community that is critical to a digital workplace. Building teacher-student and student-student relationships also becomes important in shaping these classroom communities as safe places where risk-taking and dialogic inquiry takes place. Integrating social networking platforms encourages us to create student-centred classrooms where students take an active role in their learning. As Salavuo (2008) states these platforms could act as an essential part in everyday teaching and learning or at least their functionalities should be incorporated into those online learning systems or intranet systems used currently by educational institutions. Minocha (2009a) concludes that social software seems to match well with modern thinking about educational practice. In particular, they facilitate more collaborative ways of working and they furnish a setting for learner achievements to attract an authentic audience. Chisega-Negrilaweb (2012) asserts that Web 2.0 has been a turning point in human interaction via computers, fostering social networks and even more personal environments for educational purposes. Now, a leap forward is represented by

Web 3.0, which should provide computers with the possibility to extract meaningful information from the internet so that the inordinate number of data obtained after one search will be filtered, contrasted, and collated to better suit users' needs.

Livingstone and Brake (2010) state that for most children, social networking affords considerable benefits in terms of communication and relationships, less proven benefits as yet regarding learning and participation and some transfer of bullying and other social risks from offline to online domains. Although highly positive potential, threats are also present in these digital mediums. Many schools look for options to control technologies by blocking sites (Murray, 2008). Especially teenagers' lack of awareness surrounding the consequences of social networking creates an immediate need for education. They are likely to become victims of peer aggression, sexual predation or unknowingly becoming criminals (Waddington, 2011). It can be asserted that educators have the opportunity and the responsibility to advocate for a safer online environment using every single opportunity. Abreu (2010) reports that researchers are advocating for educators to become involved in the social sites with the idea of having an open relationship with students on these platforms. The only way to empower the student is to also feel empowered as an educator. For that to happen, it requires some dedication and openness on the part of the teacher, administrator, and even parent. In this paper, we tried to explore profiles of secondary school students' use of social media and determine their views about its outcomes to learning.

## Method

The research was based on phenomenological approach which is a qualitative research design. The data were gathered by qualitative interviewing. The participants were determined by maximum variation sampling which is a type of purposeful sampling. As a result the work group consisted of 14 girls and boys from different grades of secondary school. The group included 3 fifth grade students, 3 sixth grade students, 4 seventh grade students and 4 eighth grade students. Seven of those who were interviewed are girls and 8 are boys. The ages of the participants ranged from 12 to 16. The data were gathered using standardized open-ended interviews in spring semester of 2013. The participants were interviewed face to face. In the interviews, student respondents were addressed 13 main and 28 probe questions in order to understand profiles of secondary school students' use of social networks and their views about the role of social networks in education. Seven of the main questions intended to get an idea of the profiles of the participants about their use of social media. The rest six questions focused on the role and effects of social media on educational issues. The data were analysed by content analysis technique in two ways: first the interviews were read through in order to get a feel for what is being said, identifying key themes and issues in each text. Secondly, NVivo 10, computer software package was used for further analysis (Kus, 2007; Mason, 2002; Patton, 1990; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Yildirim and Simsek, 2006). In order to improve the validity and reliability the following were considered: internal consistency, confirmation of the data, consistency of the data with estimations and generalizations, limitations of the study, sample availability, giving details about individual sources of the data, setting conceptual framework and assumptions, clearing data collecting techniques and analysis methods, introducing the data directly, including more

researchers to the processes and finally testing and comparing the findings with other related researches (Mason, 2002; Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Yildirim & Simsek, 2006).

### Findings and Results

The most frequently-used communication devices by student respondents were reported as follows: (1) Cell phones. 13 participants stated that they owned a cell phone or a smart phone. All mobile device owners (13 out of 14) stated that they can Access to internet via their mobile devices. In terms of mobile device-use efficiency, 11 of the participants considered that they had high level but 2 thought that they had medium level of efficiency. (2) Computers. All respondents stated that they owned a laptop, a personal computer or both. Nine participants stated that they had only one computer, three students had two computers and two students had three computers at their homes. Ten of the participants reported high level while the rest (4) reported to have average level of efficiency in computer-use.

13 participants reported that they had internet access at home. Moreover, 10 participants stated also that they were able to connect from school connection and 3 at internet cafe. The most common connection types were reported as ADSL (n=12) and fiber optic line (n=1). Only one respondent reported no internet access at home. The average duration of daily internet-use was reported to be 88 minutes. 12 of the participants considered themselves as highly efficient internet user while 2 reported medium level of efficiency.

Their objectives to use internet were reported to be (1) research-study (n=14), (2) chat-friendship (n=13), (3) gaming-entertainment (n=11), (4) reading news (n=10) and (5) downloading movies, MP3 and software (n=9). The participants were asked to tell what internet meant to them. They reported expressed their views as: (1) a new door opening to World (n=5), (2) a source of information (n=12), (3) a new learning opportunity with advantages and disadvantages (n=5), (4) a source of entertainment (n=8) and (5) a complicated communication tool, sometimes a "thorny path".

All respondents stated that they had a "Facebook" profile and 12 of them also reported having a YouTube profile. Moreover, there are 6 Twitter users and only 1 Google+ user. Membership time on average was calculated to be 3,2 years for Facebook and 2,2 years for YouTube, 1 year for Twitter and 3 months for Google+.. The average time spent daily on the social media was calculated to be 41 minutes for Facebook and YouTube and 35 minutes for Twitter. 2 of the participants stated that they spent "all" 6 spent "most", 3 spent "half" and 3 spent "some" of their online time on social networks. The respondents using Facebook stated that they had an average of 310 friends and Twitter users' said that they had an average of 47 friends, whereas YouTube members stated that they did not subscribe to any channel. Instead, YouTube was preferred to download videos according to the immediate needs or mood.

9 participants reported that all of their profile details were correct. The number of participants saying "My profile is open only to my friends" was 10. The rest 4 said that their profiles were open to everyone. 10 participants said that their profiles were up-to-date. Only three reported to include fake information and the reason reported was overcoming age limitations on social network sites. 8 of the participants found it good to "make new friends". 8 participants found it good for "exchanging ideas" and 4 for "providing data for homework".

According to the results, the data demonstrated that the views of the participants about outcomes of social media use to their learning can be grouped into five themes (1) Social media as information provider, (2) Two faces of social media risks versus opportunities, (3) Social media as an interaction platform (4) Social Media as a skills, communication and self-expression competence developer and (5) Social media as an agent inspiring learning to learn.

1) Social media as information provider: According to the results, secondary school students use ICT mainly to provide information for their homework and improve their learning about current school subjects. In order to do this what they usually do was copying the required information from internet and using it after editing according to their needs. However, the data explored that there was also a group of respondents that search for ready-made homework without any kind of intention about editing or working on their own with the information supplied from the internet (n12). In this regard, a respondent said, *"I use computers and internet while preparing my homework. Usually I copy down useful information and transfer them to my homework (S1)."* Another respondent confessed the following words *"I copy and paste useful info to my project Works (S2)* while another one added *"Internet is especially useful when searching for ready-made projects (S6)".* One participant expressed well the reality that we reject to accept *"I often search for info and copy-paste it to my homework. If I am lucky sometimes I can find ready-made works. This is a nice thing. (S10)."*

It was found that e-school application and online/offline educational software were also widely referred among internet based educational contents by the participants (n11). In this respect one participant said, *"I use Morpa Campus and Vitamin software (S1)"* another student added *"I often check my grades on e-school. Also, I visit online testing web pages of Körfez and Zambak. S3." The way one student uses internet exemplifies their search for more interesting lesson material. He said, "When I find educational web sites, I like watching videos related to my courses (S13)."*

The data showed that respondents spent time on friendship and entertainment websites along with educational engagement (n8). In this respect a student said, *"e-school web site is a nice one for my learning but I also watch videos uploaded. I feel sometimes very amused. Internet is also a nice medium to communicate (S1)."* Another student said, *"I find it both useful for my learning and entertainment (S5)."* A student said, *"I do my homework via online resources and later, I watch online movies or listen to mp3s (S10)."*

2). Two faces of social media risks versus opportunities: The data revealed that students are cautious in accepting the friendship requests in social media to some extent (n12). I only accept the ones I know. Mostly, they are my school mates. Regarding this issue a student said *"I only invite and accept people whom I am familiar with (S3)."* Another student expressed the same approach more robust saying *"I don't accept strangers (S8)."* On the other hand there is evidence that there is low awareness to the online threats accordingly. It seems that respondents are not aware enough that they could be subjects of online threats (n13). In this regard one of the participants said, *"Social media has both positive and negative effects but the quality of the effect primarily depends on users (S6)."* Another participant said, *"It depends on how you use it. I don't see any disadvantage since I use it carefully (S13)."*

The participants thought that there must be some kind of balance for attention and control on the use of social media (n10). A participant said, *"It depends on user, if used logically,*



*no problem happens (S3)*” Another student told his awareness saying *“My mother doesn’t want me to spend too much time on the internet, one hour a day is okay says she (S11).”* Another student said, *“There must be some kind of control. You should not spend too much time on the internet (S12).”*

The data proved that social media engagement is also a source of new opportunities on the side of learning by setting direct relations with their teachers to some extent. It is significant to find that all respondents, although they felt a little hesitation because of disturbing their teachers out of school hours (n7), tried to contact their teachers through searching for their profiles and invited them for communication in these friendship platforms. In this regard a lot of participants said, *“I have my teachers in my friends list. I visit their profile pages but I feel a bit shy to write any kind of comment (S1, S2, S5).”*

3) Social media as an interaction platform: All respondents stated that they used social network sites as a friendship tool (n14). The finding implies that participants meet their social interaction needs via social media out of school. Some of the participants stated that the more they make friends the more they feel better and therefore, they feel more motivated while using, sharing and posting ideas and materials (n7). For example, S4 said, *“The more I have friends, the more I am happier since I feel myself loved by others.”* and S6 said, *“The more I make friends, the more I want to share and post.”* The importance attached to social interaction perhaps best illustrated by S10 saying, *“When I don’t have many friends online, I feel myself lonely.”*

Respondents reported that they mostly social media to share photos, pictures, anecdotes and various videos (n14). *In this respect S1 said, “I love posting jokes and funny pictures.” and S5 said, “I often share photos, funny videos, anecdotes and comics.”*

Majority of respondents expressed that they felt happy when their posts were “liked”, “re-shared”, “tagged” and commented on (n9). In this sense, S1 said, *“If liked and re-shared, I feel happy.”* S6 said, *“It is nice to be liked by others.”* And S10 said, *“It makes me think that I am being liked.”*

The analysis revealed that the motives driving respondents to use social networks were, to a great extent, the popularity of the social networks among youngsters, extensive opportunities presented to share and communicate, feeling free to express oneself and to own the control and choice process. More over they also stated that social media platforms were found to be “user-friendly” (n14). In this respect a participant said, *“I use social sites to keep in touch with my friends (S1).”* About the reason of using social media another one said, *“Because my friends are using such web sites (S2).”* and S7 said, *“Everybody is there online, they are so popular.”* About having control over the type and quality of the communication a participant said, *“I like being able to choose what and when to watch (S3).”* S5 said, *“My friends are online on such networks and it is nice to share something together.”*

4) Social Media as a skills, communication and self-expression competence developer: One of the most significant findings was that participants stated that social media engagement helped them to develop language skills both in mother tongue and in English as a second language. S8 said, *“Since I do not know English well, it is good for me that social media help me develop my Turkish language skills and encourage me to learn English at the same time.”* S14 said, *“Sometimes, we give examples and talk about such web sites during media literacy course.”*

and S13 said, *"While chatting and writing online, it is possible that our language abilities and grammar would improve."*

Respondents reported that engaging with activities on social network help them also to improve their communicative competence such as communicative attitudes, self-expression and making friendships (n8). In this respect S1 said, *"The longer we keep in touch, the better and deeper our friendship develops."* S8 said, *"Because I made new friends and tried to introduce myself over and over in the social media, I started to feel I am better and more comfortable at expressing myself now than I was in the past."* S1 and S8 said *"Now, I am more comfortable at making a speech. And I express myself better without hesitation to be misunderstood."*

5) Social media as an agent inspiring learning to learn: What is significant in the findings is that secondary school students not only communicate their friends about all kinds of their interests but also they share school issues. It is also important to note that most of their friendships were constituted from the school environment. This is also significant by means of thinking about using social media for educational issues professionally. The following quotations illustrate these findings well: *"We usually talk about what happened at school (S4)."* *"Mostly, we chat about courses, friends and such things (S6)",* *"We gossip about the daily things, about grades, about exams, etc. (S9)."*, *"They provide us a medium to talk about things that we cannot find time while at school (S10)."*

There is also more supporting evidence about unique educational medium role of the social media engagement. All of the respondents stated that social media provide a fruitful place to collaborate and cooperate about the courses and homework. It can be clearly seen that keeping staying connected students use such sites as a "life guard" to ask for help and to exchange information about their learning responsibilities (n14). The following quotations illustrate these findings well: *"We ask about courses and homework and exchange resources (S2)."*, *"If I was absent on that day, I ask my friends what happened that day. (S5)."*, *"We sometimes post exam dates on our walls. (S14)."*, *"We learn who got which grade, who was more successful, what questions were asked in the exam, etc. (S9)."*, *"If I get stuck, I ask my online classmates (S14)."*

On the other hand, the findings also revealed that social media have not provided students with professional education content. In this respect S1 said, *"There is no educative social network site. If I know, I would follow."*, S9 said, *"I don't know if there is a social network site related to education."*, and S10 said, *"There are no such pages on Facebook."* Moreover secondary school students have not had access to professionally prepared educational web sites other than the ones which were prepared by their schools within e-school framework. This finding was approved by the following quotation from S13 saying *"I don't know whether there is a social website focussing on education."* In general by means of educational issues social media have served in two ways. First students used it to share and meet some of their educational needs and secondly they attempted to reach their teachers' expertise which implies that they seek for professional guidance while chatting daily or what we can call making "phatic communication". This finding is supported by the views and statements of the participants. Some participants reported that they communicated their teachers most of the times about their homework, such as mentioning its difficulty and asking for advices etc. (n8). In this regard, one participant explained his hesitation saying *"I don't want to write anything on their wall in case I may bother*

*them (S6).*” One student said, *“When I can’t find answers to my questions about my lessons from my friends, I tend to ask my teachers if they are online (S13).”* Some students complained about the attitudes of their teachers. They stated that though their teachers answered their questions about educational issues instantly, they gave the impression that they preferred to keep away from the students and did not share any further information (n4). This finding is also significant in that it can be seen as students’ wish for an opportunity to do supplementary activities to their learning. In this respect one student said, *“I feel a bit shy to ask and bother my teachers but I would be very happy in case they shared any kind of information about our lessons (S11).”*

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to explore profiles of secondary school students’ use of social media and determine their views about its outcomes to learning. The data showed that the student respondents had high profiles of using new ICT technologies in that they are also active users of internet via computers and mobile smart phones. In this sense, it can easily be asserted that the combination of the new generation and the new technologies seems to shock the educational perspective which was designed by the adults for them so far.

The large spectrum of their use of internet such as research-study, chat-friendship, gaming-entertainment, reading news, downloading movies, MP3 and software should be seen as an opportunity to attract their attention to educational issues by educational authorities. The data revealed that what they imposed to these technologies and internet was a new door to the world, in other words their attempts are likely to encourage them to use and adopt learning on their own with fun.

According to the results, the data demonstrated that the views of the participants about outcomes of social media use in relation to their learning can be grouped into five themes 1) Social media as information provider: The data showed that students, as expected, tried to watch, choose, perceive and react to the information “flowing from the stream”. In this sense social media was referred to as a source of surfing for information both for school issues and personal interests. 2) Two faces of social media risks versus opportunities: It can be asserted that the way students used the social media included both risks and opportunities by means of the quality of their interrelationships 3) Social media as an interaction platform: The data implied that social media provided students with a fertile setting to socialize, interact and express self ideas and emotions. 4) Social media as a skill, communication and self-expression competence developer: It supports learning indirectly through strengthening communicative and language skills and increasing the power of perception that leads to a better comprehension. 5) Social media as an agent inspiring learning to learn: Statements of the participants explored that social media content occupied students with their own learning history.

The analysis revealed that the popularity of the social networks among youngsters, extensive opportunities presented to share and communicate, feeling free to express oneself and to own the control and choice process attracted students’ attention and suck them in. It is significant to find that social media was used by the students for educational purposes. Although this attempt seems not to be purposeful, structured and creative, when it is considered by the teachers and other education authorities, one can expect a more meaningful educational content and function. As Chen and Bryer (2012) asserted, if informal social networks are facilitated and

agenda-driven, learning can be achieved. The data about the way students used e-school applications can also be evidence for a more purposeful use of social media in and out of the school. In this respect, Coombs et. al (2010) proposed that integrating social networking platforms encourages us to create student-centered classrooms where students take an active role in their learning.

The findings revealed that learning has been supplied not only by contents and processes structured for educational purposes but also by personal relationships by which interests were shared among peers so that perception and comprehension capacities were increased. For example according to the results of a research there is a robust connection between Facebook usage and indicators of social capital (Ellison et al., 2007). In this regard, Chen and Bryer (2012) concluded that the publicly open social media sites provide students with access to more information and experiences than they would get in a closed environment alone.

As a result of the findings, the relationship between social media and self development can possibly be formulated as the more relationships you have in social media, the more you experience communication and the more progress in self expression you make. As a result social media provide a fruitful place to collaborate and cooperate about the courses and homework as well as other personal interests. It was asserted that facebook and similar social media programs allow students to gather outside of class to collaborate and exchange ideas about assignments (O’Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson, & Council on Communications and Media, 2011). The findings of our research also demonstrated that most of the participants stated that their list of friends in social media was constituted mostly from the school environment. There is evidence about the effect of social media communication, in case a group of school mates meet, results with multi-learning experience. For example Lin, Hoffman and Borengasser (2013) purported that while twitter has been often recommended as a means to increase collaboration and interconnection among students, students tend to be most interested in it for information sharing, both in terms of resources related to the course and for commenting on their personal and immediate status.

It is also significant to find that students are enthusiastic to contact and communicate their teachers on the internet via social media tools mostly for educational issues. Abreu (2010) suggested that educators should become involved in the social sites with the idea of having an open relationship with students on these platforms. As Crockett (2005) noted well, social media helps teachers to keep their students motivated about other subjects as well. However, we noted that because students got the impression of unwillingness to communicate on the teachers’ side such as short and limited answers or a delay at responding to their messages, bridges started to be built and a good opportunity for possible beneficial communication about many developmental issues was lost. According to the findings of a related research, high teacher self-disclosure as operationalized may lead students to higher levels of anticipated motivation and affective learning and lend to a more comfortable classroom climate (Mazer, Murphy and Simond, 2007). In this respect it is important to make teachers aware of new possibilities in students’ learning practices with integration of social media/Web 2.0 (Buus, 2012).

Another significant finding was about safety in that virtual cooperation and communication world. As a result, based on the findings students expressed some kind of preventive strategies either based on their experiences or taught by their parents. On the other hand, it can be asserted that social media platforms are still not safe for secondary school age

group because of a lot of social and technical reasons. Livingstone and Brake (2010) pointed out to a difficulty in developing privacy policy that the more opportunities teenagers take up, the more risks they encounter, and the more policy attempts to limit risks the more it may also limit opportunities. However, we need to educate young people more deeply about privacy, trust and the social Web (Anderson, 2007). Safe and responsible use of social media means that young people can realise the benefits of online collaboration by learning about how to minimise the risks (Minocha, 2009a).

We can conclude that in general by means of educational issues social media have served in two ways. First student used it to share and meet some of their educational needs but randomly because social media have not provided students with professional education content and secondly we can see their attempts to reach their teachers' expertise which implies that they seek for professional guidance to their learning. Latest developments in ICT inevitably has arisen the question "how to use social media to facilitate student learning? As education authorities, the worst thing to do is avoiding the new ICT based communication opportunities by which students can be motivated better to learning to learn strategies, their critical thinking skills are empowered and become more enthusiastic about learning (Crockett, 2005). Social media, web sites and any kind of internet based applications should be considered in formal and informal instruction. As Buus (2012) suggests it is important to scaffold teachers in the learning design, development and implementation of these changes and modifications in their learning practices. it is possible to learn what works from current practices in designing social media spaces for learning. Each of these practices can be established through experimental or other research design to gain better understanding of what works and in what contexts (Chen and Bryer, 2012). Consequently, the data revealed that teachers should not miss the opportunity to teach and guide their students through social media. In order to that the thing needed is to provide teachers with infrastructure support technically and train them about how to use social media for professional applications. Perhaps the most important thing is as a starting point to develop a positive attitude in teachers on behalf of use of social media in instructional issues.

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