Literature Review

Blogging <http://campustechnology.com/articles/2011/01/12/can-blogging-make-a-difference.aspx>

Siemens <http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan_05/article01.htm>

**Definition of social media**

Since the invention of the telephone, people have been using social media to communicate, but today’s use of social media is much more sophisticated than a one-on-one conversation and it entails a network of people communicating through the web. Nowadays, social media otherwise known by social software or Web 2.0 tools, is referred to a group of technology tools that promotes personal repertoire of information or could promote interactivity and communication of individuals with each other through an online, internet-based application (Dabbagh & Reo, 2011; Cistek-Chandler, 2012).

Chen and Bryer (2012) adopt the following definition of social media as presented in Bryer and Zavatarro (2011), “Social media are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders. These technologies include blogs, wikis, media (audio, photo, video, text) sharing tools, networking platforms (including Facebook), and virtual worlds.”

While some researchers define social media as tools that promote collaboration, others (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012) present a diagram on how social media can be used as a personal learning environment (PLE) on three different levels that serve different purposes: personal information management, social interaction and collaboration, and information aggregation and management. For the purpose of this study, I refer to social media tools as means for social interaction and collaboration through different tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites such as Facebook, and micro-blogging sites such as Twitter.

**Types of social media tools**

“Examples of Web 2.0 technologies include

experience- and resource-sharing tools such as

Delicious, WordPress, and Twitter that enable

online/social bookmarking, blogging, and microblogging

respectively; wiki software such as

PBworks that enables the creation of collaborative

workspaces; media sharing tools such as Flickr

and YouTube that enable social tagging (Peterson,

2006; VanderWal, 2005); and social networking

applications such as Facebook and LinkedIn that

enable sociosemantic networking (Seldow, 2007).

The proliferation of Web 2.0 technologies is affording

the creation of networked learning experiences

that foster the characteristics of Web 2.0 as

a concept resulting in new social behaviors and

pedagogical practices (Alexander, 2006; Cormier,

2008; Carroll, 2008).” Dabbagh and Reo

**Theory behind social media and why it could promote learning**

Social media stems from natural interaction and collaboration between individuals to create communities, and it stems from the social learning theory that is crowned by Bandura (1977) and Vygotsky (1978). Bandura focused on the idea that humans learn from each other through observation, imitation, and modeling, and in order to be efficient at the last one, they need to be attentive, retain information, reproduce it, and have the motivation to do so. Similarly, Vygotsky’s work focused on the idea that humans develop and learn through social interaction. Perhaps, Vygotsky started a new perspective on student-teacher relationship which he thought to be more of reciprocal benefit rather than a one-way benefit. He advocated the role of the teacher as a facilitator rather than the only provider of knowledge which is evident in today’s e-learning pedagogy. At that time, Bandura and Vygotsky did not study this theory in the light of the technologies and the social media tools that exist today, but they discussed the natural, non-linear phenomenon of humans’ learning which is referred to as informal learning (Siemens, 2005;) and that could be translated into what we are witnessing today in the dynamic, collaborative world of social media.

Cistek-Chandler (2012) cites Downes (2006) who connects e-learning technologies with social learning theory adding to it the layer of the varied and collective resources that make today’s social media different from the face to face social interaction. He states that,

Learning… occurs in communities, where the practice of learning is the participation in the community. A learning activity is, in essence, a conversation undertaken between the learner and other members of the community. This conversation, in the Web 2.0 era, consists not only of words, but of images, video, multimedia and more. This conversation forms a rich tapestry of resources, dynamic and interconnected, created not only by experts but by all members of the community, including learners. (p. 82).

Siemens (2005) proposes a new learning theory, connectivism, in which he addresses more than the process of learning that the social learning theory, behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism suggest. In connectivism, he emphasizes the value of what is being learned, and he defines it as follows:

Connectivism is the integration of principles explored by chaos, network, and complexity and self-organization theories. Learning is a process that occurs within nebulous environments of shifting core elements – not entirely under the control of the individual. Learning (defined as actionable knowledge) can reside outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database), is focused on connecting specialized information sets, and the connections that enable us to learn more are more important than our current state of knowing.

In other words, Siemens explains that learning happens informally when individuals make sense of information circulating around them unlike the formal learning strategies that are linear. He also emphasizes the fluidity and the growth of learning in a cyclical manner as a result of connections between ideas that keep changing across place and time due to networks and interactions. Siemens offers a more up-to-date learning theory which embraces an information age which offers accessible data for all individuals resulting in a learner-centered personalized learning (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012), otherwise referred to as personal learning environments that are supported by Web 2.0.

**The use of social media in higher education**

**Relationship between student learning and social media use.**

Reference

Cistek : http://www.nu.edu/assets/resources/pageResources/journal-of-research-in-innovative-teaching-volume-5.pdf