*A Case on Learning about 'You Tubing' and 'Face booking' for Learning*

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## Abstract

This paper aims to better understand the experiences of the youth with the tapping of social media like YouTube videos and Facebook for learning. The youth of the 21st century has better autonomy of time, choice of what to learn, how to learn and when to learn with such large depositories of information and data around them with the leveraging of YouTube videos and the Facebook application. This paper is also interested in finding out the problems and issues that the students have experienced with the leveraging of the YouTube videos and the Facebook applications for learning. What must be considered here though is not the shifting ground in relation to definitional aspects but the exploration of the media and social networking applications within education and pedagogic possibilities. Using a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with a case study of keen participants of youth, whose age ranges from 18 to early 20s, from a particular polytechnic in Singapore, this papers seeks to explore and understand the experiences and the issues and difficulties as experienced by the youth with the leveraging of YouTube and Facebook for learning. From the data, the youth indicated they could learn informally about 'knowledge of the world' and on 'life's experiences' using the YouTube videos and from the network of friends with Facebook. However, the youth also experienced the problems of distractions and the abundance of unreliable information, thus rendering the use of the social media and networking applications as unsuitable pedagogical tools for formal learning. The role of the educators would be to tap on these current and socially collaborative tools to facilitate students' learning that is based on self-discovery. There can be learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom and on lifelong learning at any time and at any place with YouTube videos and Facebook.

**Keywords:** YouTube, Facebook, Youth Culture, Social-Media, Networking and Informal Learning

## Introduction

Using a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with keen participants of youth, whose age ranges from 18 to early 20s, from a particular polytechnic and a University in Singapore, this papers seeks to explore and understand the learning experiences of youth with the leveraging of media and social networking applications like YouTube and Facebook for learning. Oblinger (2006) points out that the characteristics of the 21st century youth are technologically inclined and have a high preference for active and participatory experiences of both face-to-face as well as online learning. This high preference for a participatory experience via the social media and netwroking applications does not mean that the youth need to be online synchronously or be together physically. Rather, the youth or the students can be discussing, communicating and sharing information and knowledge synchronously or asynchronously using the various social media and networking applications like YouTube and Facebook at any time and at any place as long as there is Internet connectivity.

O'Hanlon (2007) suggests that the implementation of social media technologies, specifically social networking, is what students are using every day and it is this social setting that breeds the students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to use technologies for learning. Simonson et al. (2000) describe online learning and social networking tools as more convenient than the traditional classroom learning (the use of textbooks for learning) because of the availability of online materials and 24 hour access to learning.

### YouTube Videos and Facebook Connection

*Video Sharing Sites - YouTube*

YouTube is increasingly being used by educators as a pedagogic resource for many interesting newsworthy events to teach students especially within an 'English as a Second Language' course, (Duffy, 2008). The students watched the videos as a resource towards learning the essentials of the English Language and the students get enjoyment from watching the videos. There was positive students' feedback about the learning of English as a Second language through the YouTube videos (Duffy, 2008). To Duffy (2008), videos can be a powerful educational and motivational tool but the effectiveness of You Tube is not in itself but in how it is used towards achieving learning goals and objectives before it can be seen as an effective learning tool. Effective instructional video is student-centred and can be used for student pedagogy with the video as a vehicle for students' discovery of knowledge and for instructional videos on an online space to share student authored content (Duffy, 2008). Today's youth have much experience with video and photo-sharing media such as YouTube (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008). This video-sharing media can be incorporated into a constructivist classroom as learning tools as the youth; the students are actively creating their own learning experiences through viewing and creating videos and educators can use this as a tool for engaging the youth in meaningful learning experiences (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008).

With the discourse on the use of YouTube videos for learning now and in the future, educators may want to consider how to engage students with YouTube to teach students to think critically about their potential uses of YouTube videos for collaborative and meaningful social learning experiences with one another.

*Social NetworkingApplication – Facebook*

Besides the use of YouTube videos for collaborative students' learning experiences, Facebook also shares many of the qualities of a good education technology in its reflective element, allowing for peer feedback and a fit for the social context of learning. The conversational and collaborative characteristics of Face book are also "collaborative and encourage active participatory role for users" (Maloney 2007, p.26). According to Stutzman (2005), students use Facebook to 'hang out' with friends, learn about each other or simply as a directory to other websites and knowledge. Students often use Facebook for social purposes to develop social networking skills with their peers at school and from previous institutions they have attended. Students' use of Facebook is profoundly informal and often at a tangent with the official learning aims of educators (Stutzman, 2005). It seems that the formal use of Facebook as a tool for rigorous academic study is fairly rare, but the use of Facebook as a tool for teaching and learning has been on the rise recently.

According to Selwyn (2009), Facebook is very useful as a tool for negotiating a social and community identity, such as student identity as a university student. Selwyn (2009) conducted an extensive survey of the contents of Facebook postings by 909 undergraduate students in the U.K and found that the students would use Facebook particularly to negotiate their identity as a university student by sharing feelings and perceptions about the institution and teaching staff. The study has not been able to extensively show that Facebook is fully welcomed as a good teaching and learning pedagogy. There seems to be a gap in the literature about the use of YouTube and Facebook for learning among the youth (Singapore Polytechnic, 2009; Selwyn, 2009). Thus, this paper aims to seek a better understanding of the youth's learning experiences with YouTube videos and the Facebook connections as well as the problems and difficulties associated with the leveraging of these social media applications for the students' learning.

**Discussions – Social Connectivity with Friends and Informal Learning**

The youth, the students liked to be connected with one another using Facebook to make friends and to learn from one another. They also liked to use YouTube videos for informal learning, the learning of information and knowledge that extends beyond the knowledge learnt in school and from the textbook. They felt that with the rich connectivity with many people and friends online, "that learning … would be an enriching experience that no textbooks could provide" (see Appendix I).

To the students, informal learning via YouTube videos and Facebook connections are the learning about "knowledge of the world" and "life's experiences" from the YouTube videos (see Appendix I). This is parallel to the literature that the YouTube videos can be powerful educational and motivational tool for the students to partake in the creation and sharing of videos for self-discovery and for knowledge through active participation of the social media (Duffy, 2008; Mullen & Wedwick, 2008).

The Internet and the social media networking applications were not only just a haven from the outside world of education but were seen more as a network of informal connections that crossed the boundaries of learning, work and leisure (see Appendix I). The students were tapping into the interactive media and the social networking tool for informal socialization with peers and the knowledge community, especially with Facebook for communication, information gathering and content sharing. This knowledge was identified by the students as informal learning (see Appendix I). This echoes some of the literature of the informal use of Facebook (Selwyn, 2009), whereby the students' main use of Facebook was to maintain relationships with existing known friends, and their reported use of Facebook for entertainment purposes, to vent their emotions and to 'hang out' with their friends and for social purposes (Stutzman, 2005).

*Discussions - Problems of Distractions and Unreliable Information*

The students were distracted with the myriad of online games while using the YouTube videos and Facebook applications for learning. Distraction can also be in the form of 'invites' which is a feature of the various social networking activities, like Facebook. The students thus identified that the problems of these distractions actually 'take away' their learning time when they were using the YouTube videos and the Facebook applications (see Appendix I). The students did not think positively of using the YouTube videos and Facebook applications for formal learning related to academic study due to the open nature and connectivity of the applications with so many different people (see Appendix I).

In fact, the students did not fully credit the postings and information as reliable and credible. Together with the abundance of information and knowledge, the students could be exposed to the danger of being mis-informed by the open and collaborative nature of sharing and postings from anyone within or out of the social connections.

The students voiced major concerns over the legitimacy of reliable information from the YouTube videos and the Facebook postings for schoolwork or for educational purposes (see Appendix I). With the abundance of some of the YouTube videos and Facebook videos as "unpleasant", "uncouth" and "not educational" , the students also suggested that the videos and the Facebook postings be taken with "a pinch of salt" (see Appendix I).

Apparently, the students did not think positively towards using YouTube and Facebook for formal learning academically, and instead, they deferred to the teachers with the formal learning of schoolwork preferring "face-to-face" sessions with the teachers if I were to encounter problems and difficulties with learning" (see Appendix I).

But, on the contrary, besides the "face-to-face" preference to answer to their questions toward learning, the students expressed an interest for their teachers to be leveraging on the social media and networking applications "as good and engaging teaching aids" (see Appendix I). To the students, they deferred to the teachers for proper

guidance with YouTube videos and Facebook postings "when tutors suggest and recommend the websites and links on Facebook for learning, then it is a good learning tool for students (see Appendix I).

Hence, it is essential and vital for educators to be in tune with the changes of the technically driven 21st century society, necessitating the tapping of these current and socially collaborative tools to facilitate and to guide students' learning towards students' learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom and lifelong learning at any time.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

From the data the students indicated that they liked the active participatory experiences of using the social networking applications, like Facebook for making friends, to learn about information and knowledge informally with the network of friends (See Appendix I). From the YouTube videos and the Facebook postings and connections, they could learn about information and knowledge pertaining to every day activities which extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom and the textbook. But, it is also due to the large amount of information and the abundance of videos and knoweldge that could lead to an information overload and students being mis-informed instead. With the various social activities and the myriad of games online; the distractions of which would take away the students' learning time (see Appendix I).

Although there are the positive benefits of leveraging on learning technologies for learning educators cannot take for granted and assume that the use of social media and networking applications will naturally benefit the students (see Selwyn, 2009). Distractions, from the social activities and games and the unreliable and not credible information as well as being mis-informed are some of the issues with using the social media and networking applications for learning. Thus, the social media and networking applications of YouTube and Facebook are suitable and effective tools for the social reasons of networking, making friends, making new friends, and for students to be learning informally.

Informal learning, in this context, is usually highly self-directed for additional or future learning (NSF, 2006). There is learning that extends beyond the school compound and the school textbook or curriculum. There is learning that is beyond the basics of arithmetic, and languages and that based on academic content (Richardson, 2008). It also points to the educators' role in the students' life which is changing, from that of managing school content to connecting students in new ways to other learners, resources, and expertise (Richardson, 2008).

Hence, the role of the educator is no longer to passively feed students information and knowledge but to be a facilitator to guide students towards a self-directed and 'self-discovery' learning process with an authentic context of the real world in society with the participatory culture of social media and networking applications (Richardson, 2008).

It is inevitable that social media and networking applications are becoming a part of everyday living and learning. With the leveraging of these social media and networking applications for learning, the students are given the autonomy to be owners of their own learning where there are online spaces and opportunities created that allow the students to collectively share, discuss, and create their own representations of information and knowledge with one another in the technically driven society of the 21st century (see Appendix I).

The world we live in today is very different than the world twenty to thirty years ago. The 21st century is a media saturated, technologically dependent, and globally connected world! Most importantly, the students may need to be reminded on how to leverage on these technological social media networking applications (which some may already know) to learn from them, gain information, reflect on this and validate that information with one another to obtain knowledge and understanding to be more self-directed learners.

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## *Appendix I: Samples of Interviews Transcripts*

*Like more sharing and communication between all for knowledge of the world than just information from the textbooks and curriculum….*

(E3.m4a, 35:01sec)

*Learning can take place at anytime and anyplace on Facebook.*

(E3.m4a, 35:03sec)

*I like the social interactive aspect of sharing and openly discussing interesting topics on Facebook and preparing myself for the real working world. Learning using Facebook postings would be an enriching experience that no textbooks could provide.*

(J3.m4a, 16:21sec)

*I learn much more from Facebook as more people are interlinked and connected.*

(J3.m4a, 16:22sec)

*I would sometimes learn life's experiences through watching the YouTube and Facebook videos.*

(D2.m4a, 17:29sec)

*It will be a good learning tool if the YouTube videos are well recommended by classmates, friends and teachers …. the videos can be used as good and engaging teaching aids.*

(E2.m4a, 29:00sec)

*When tutors suggest and recommend the websites and links on Facebook for learning, then it is a good learning tool for students.*

(D3.m4a, 19:11sec)

*I would rather prefer face-to-face sessions with the teachers if I were to encounter problems and difficulties with learning.*

(E4.m4a, 38:02sec)

*Facebook is not considered as a formal learning tool, as friends or classmates would not take the posts too seriously as information meant for learning.*

(P2.m4a, 38:51sec)

*Facebook is not reliable and credible enough to be used as a point of reference for academic purposes.*

(P2.m4a, 38:47sec)

*Facebook is used more appropriately for social interaction and not for educational purposes of learning for students.*

(D2.m4a, 19:07sec)

*Distractions such as games and videos on both Facebook and YouTube would take away most of the time meant for doing research and for reading of information and knowledge.*

(P2.m4a, 39:58sec)

*Many of my friends will get invited to play the games on Facebook so, this distraction actually take away learning time.*
   (J4.m4a, 21:04sec)


*Take it with a pinch of salt; I feel that the YouTube videos are unpleasant at times and too uncouth for some young viewers… there are not many educational videos worth watching.*

   (J4.m4a, 17:33sec)