Core Unit 5: Technology and society

**Lecture 5A: Social media in education**

Hi everybody and welcome to my lecture today. Before beginning I want to ask you all a question. How many items of technology do you have in your sight right now? If I had to guess, I would say you are probably watching this through a computer. You have your own laptop or tablet nearby, and even closer to you than that is perhaps your most sacred possession of all, your cell phone. And with these devices comes access to social media. Indeed, this form of media seems to permeate our daily lives and how this technology is being used, integrated, utilised or abused is of constant discussion in general society and in academic research. One area of life that is increasingly impacted by social media is education, and most of us have experienced the bad and the goods. Have you ever been researching something on the best information source the world has ever known, the Internet, when suddenly you get distracted by the buzzing sound of a message coming through.

Hang on is that my phone? Sorry guys.

So anyway, in this lecture I want to explore the impact of social media on education. I'll first provide a general overview of when and where social media was introduced. And then I'll narrow the focus to look at the impact on education. I'll look at its reported negative effects before looking at the more positive and promising ways that social media impacts educational environments.

So to start then, what really is social media? Well, it can be commonly defined as any website or application that enables users to create and share content, or to participate in social networking. The first sites that offered this capability went live in around 1995, with ones called Luna Storm in Sweden and Six Degrees in the US. The technology used had been developing since the 1970s, but nonetheless the launch of these sites is considered a milestone, a turning point in widespread social media. From 1996, AOL, Yahoo and MSN all launched instant messaging services, and in the early 2000s we saw the emergence of MySpace and then Facebook, which dominated Western platforms at the time. It took a few more years before Eastern companies caught up, but in 2009 Weibo was launched in China and globally, social media is now part of the daily lives of most of the world’s population. And when you think about social media and how it has affected society since then, you may intuitively think of words such as communication or connection or even convenience, which would all be accurate. But is this true of education? I'd be interested to know whether you instinctively believe that social media is a positive or a negative force when it comes to education. Or is it both?

Well, let's begin this part of the lecture by looking at the negative impact. I can tell you from the perspective of an educator that social media has not been a wholly welcomed addition to the lives of our students. And there's research to back up why. Social media has been social media has been linked to poorer academic outcomes. For example, a study conducted of university students in the Middle East found that almost 60% acknowledged that they are addicted to social media and that this can lead them to rush their assignments, to feel less able to communicate face to face and for their sleep time to be significantly reduced. Now, does that resonate with any of you? Well, this results in students who study less efficiently and effectively and ultimately can lead to poor grades and disinterest in the degree subject. And these results are also supported by data from other educational institutes, including high schools, in which time wasted is considered one of the most prominent impacts of social media on education.

Another problem is that educators are recognising that their students are, much like with the news, increasingly looking for bite sized pieces of information to inform their academic studies, rather than seeking out valuable and verified books and journals. Overall, the implications of the negative effects on education, are that we are becoming less informed and are less able and less willing to process and retain complex, detailed information. But is this really fair? Some believe not. Let's now look at some of the possible benefits of social media on education.

While there are multiple studies showing face to face communication to be negatively affected by social media, there are also others that strongly indicate that social media can be used to improve learning through increased collaboration and communication. These findings have been contextualised by a theory called the Social Learning Theory. Hendrickson Fry 2011 summarised this theory by saying that people who interact with each other learn from each other. In other words, valuable learning takes place during interactions, whatever form that interaction may actually take. So rather than shy away from social media platforms, some academics now argue that educators to start to utilise them as a learning space for their students. And studies that specifically look at the application of social media in education support the social learning theory view. It's been demonstrated that social media can be successfully used alongside traditional teaching methods to strengthen skills and participation. For example, students who are assigned group projects often perform better if they have interacted about these assignments online. Social media platforms provide a space in which participants can personalise their interactions in a convenient and comfortable way. As a result, students are reportedly more engaged and perceived their learning to be more enjoyable.

Additionally, as well as being used for collaborating on specific assignments, social media is often used by students as a valuable support network. This includes information sharing, like having class WeChat groups as many of you have, and using these for checking dates and deadlines or for sharing resources. But perhaps of even greater value, social media is often used for emotional support, allowing students to voice their concerns or frustrations and find reassurance and lightheartedness in response. As a result, rather than be seen negatively as a form of media that only distracts, we can see how social media is actually supporting aspects of education. Ultimately, we are now in a society that is wholly technologically driven, and social media is a significant aspect of that. If we want to be successful in education, perhaps it is necessary to recognise the opportunities that social media offers and see how we can capitalise on that. It is very clear that the misuse of social media is a significant challenge that is extremely difficult to overcome in all walks of life, including education. However, social media cannot be ignored. In fact, at this stage one thing is evident. We have an individual responsibility to make the most of this technological development.

To end, then, with a final thought, how can we as individuals safeguard a future that ensures performance is enhanced by and not hindered by technology? That's all for today. Thank you all for listening.

大家好，欢迎来到我今天的讲座。在开始之前，我想问大家一个问题。你现在的视线里有多少项技术？如果让我猜，我会说你可能正在通过电脑看这个节目。你有自己的笔记本电脑或平板电脑在附近，而比这更近的可能是你最神圣的财产，你的手机。而有了这些设备，就可以接触到社交媒体。事实上，这种形式的媒体似乎渗透到我们的日常生活中，这种技术如何被使用、整合、利用或滥用，在一般社会和学术研究中不断被讨论。生活中越来越受到社交媒体影响的一个领域是教育，我们大多数人都经历过坏事和好事。你是否曾经在世界有史以来最好的信息来源--互联网上研究过什么，突然你被一个嗡嗡作响的信息传来的声音分散了注意力。  
等一下，是我的电话吗？对不起，各位。  
所以，无论如何，在这个讲座中，我想探讨社交媒体对教育的影响。首先，我将对社交媒体的出现时间和地点做一个总体概述。然后，我将缩小焦点，看看对教育的影响。在探讨社交媒体对教育环境产生的更积极、更有前景的影响之前，我会先看看它的负面效应。  
那么，首先，什么是真正的社交媒体？嗯，它通常可以被定义为任何网站或应用程序，使用户能够创建和分享内容，或参与社交网络。第一个提供这种功能的网站在1995年左右上线，在瑞典称为Luna Storm，在美国称为Six Degrees。所使用的技术自1970年代以来一直在发展，但尽管如此，这些网站的推出被认为是一个里程碑，是社会媒体普及的转折点。从1996年开始，AOL、雅虎和MSN都推出了即时通讯服务，在21世纪初，我们看到了MySpace的出现，然后是Facebook，它们在当时主导了西方平台。又过了几年，东方公司才迎头赶上，但在2009年，微博在中国推出，在全球范围内，社交媒体现在是世界上大多数人口日常生活的一部分。当你想到社交媒体以及它自那时以来对社会的影响时，你可能会直觉地想到诸如沟通或联系，甚至便利等词语，这些都是准确的。但是，教育也是如此吗？我很想知道，当涉及到教育时，你是否本能地认为社交媒体是一种积极或消极的力量。还是两者都是？  
好吧，让我们在讲座的这一部分开始，看看负面影响。我可以从一个教育工作者的角度告诉你，社交媒体对我们学生的生活来说并不是一个完全受欢迎的补充。而且有研究证明了原因。社交媒体已经与较差的学术成果有关。例如，一项针对中东地区大学生的研究发现，近60%的人承认他们沉迷于社交媒体，这可能会导致他们匆忙完成作业，觉得不太能面对面交流，而且睡眠时间也会大大减少。现在，这是否与你们中的任何人产生了共鸣？好吧，这导致学生的学习效率和效果降低，最终可能导致成绩不佳和对学位科目不感兴趣。而这些结果也得到了其他教育机构的数据支持，包括高中，其中浪费时间被认为是社交媒体对教育最突出的影响之一。  
另一个问题是，教育工作者认识到，他们的学生与新闻一样，越来越多地寻找一口大小的信息来为他们的学术研究提供信息，而不是寻找有价值的、经过验证的书籍和期刊。总的来说，对教育产生的负面影响是，我们的信息量越来越少，处理和保留复杂、详细信息的能力和意愿也越来越低。但这真的公平吗？有些人认为不公平。现在让我们来看看社交媒体对教育可能带来的一些好处。  
虽然有多项研究显示，面对面的交流会受到社交媒体的负面影响，但也有其他研究强烈表明，社交媒体可以通过增加合作和交流来改善学习。这些研究结果被一种叫做社会学习理论的理论框住了。Hendrickson Fry 2011年对这一理论的总结是：相互交流的人都会相互学习。换句话说，有价值的学习发生在互动过程中，无论这种互动实际上采取什么形式。因此，一些学者现在认为，教育工作者不应回避社交媒体平台，而应开始利用它们作为学生的学习空间。专门研究社交媒体在教育中的应用的研究支持社会学习理论的观点。事实证明，社交媒体可以成功地与传统教学方法一起使用，以加强技能和参与。例如，被分配到小组项目的学生如果在网上就这些作业进行过交流，往往表现得更好。社交媒体平台提供了一个空间，参与者可以以一种方便和舒适的方式进行个性化的互动。因此，学生们据说会更加投入，并认为他们的学习会更加愉快。

此外，除了用于合作完成特定的作业外，社交媒体还经常被学生用作宝贵的支持网络。这包括信息共享，比如像你们中的许多人一样有班级微信群，并利用这些群来检查日期和截止日期，或分享资源。但也许更有价值的是，社交媒体经常被用来提供情感支持，让学生表达他们的担忧或挫折，并在回应中找到安慰和轻松的感觉。因此，我们可以看到社交媒体实际上是在支持教育的各个方面，而不是被视为一种只会分散注意力的负面媒体形式。归根结底，我们现在处于一个完全由技术驱动的社会，而社交媒体是其中一个重要方面。如果我们想在教育领域取得成功，也许有必要认识到社交媒体提供的机会，并看看我们如何能够利用这些机会。非常清楚的是，滥用社交媒体是一个重大挑战，在各行各业，包括教育界，都是极难克服的。然而，社交媒体不能被忽视。事实上，在这个阶段，有一件事是显而易见的。我们个人有责任最大限度地利用这一技术发展。

那么，在最后的思考中，作为个人，我们如何才能保障未来，确保绩效被技术提升而不是阻碍？今天就到此为止。谢谢大家的聆听。