# Students' Preferences of Technology Usage for Their Learning Engagement

**Muhammad Tanveer Afzal[*], Nazia Fardous**

Department of Secondary Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, Allama Iqbal Open University, H-8, Islamabad Pakistan
*Corresponding author: mtapk@yahoo.com

**Abstract**  Use of technology has revolutionized our society. Social media is the form of technology which is greatly influencing our social life. Education is a social process and social media can effectively be used in teaching learning process. The aim of this study was to find out the students preference of technology (Skype, Face book, Twitter, Whatsapp and mobile SMS) usage for their learning engagement (teachers notes, quizzes and feedback). All the undergraduate students of public colleges of district Sialkot were selected as the population of this study while 67 students were randomly selected as the sample of this study. The researchers employed the mixed method to explore the learners preferences regarding engagement in which questionnaire as a quantitative tool and interview a qualitative tool to triangulate the data were used. The results of this study indicated that students were well aware of the use of social media in teaching and learning process. Skype was most preferred media of students learning engagement. Facebook was the second preferred media for students learning engagement while whatasapp, mobile sms and twitter were the least preferred media for students learning engagement. Therefore, the researchers recommend that before the integration of the technological applications in the learning process a careful analysis of the social media may be performed. On the basis of this data the preferred media is Skype usage. Now it's up to the technical experts to consider the different applications of Skype in learning process.

*Keywords*: *social media in education, learning engagement, college learners and technological application in education*

## 1. Introduction

The nations depend upon education for their survival .Informal education along with the formal education plays a detrimental role in the shape of society. Media and newspapers has been important sources of informal education. Being a social process education is greatly influenced by the societal change. Technological inventions have revolutionized our societies. Internet and social media are one of the inventions which have dramatically influenced our way of living [4]. The basic components of internet and social media are communication and collaborative technologies which include video, voice, content sharing technologies and social networking, which provide a new dimension to teaching and learning and provide opportunities for students and teachers for teaching and learning. These technologies have changed the role of teacher from deliverers of instruction to that of facilitators of learning and have made students the center of attention [1,3,5].

Kearsley's and Shneiderman has developed a theoretical framework for technology-based teaching and learning which has benefited curriculum developers and provided clear guidelines which are specifically related with Information and Communication Technology (ICT),

and has proved helpful in increasing the credibility of the benefits of ICT in educational settings.

Social media has been rapidly becoming the focus of the attention of new generation. Face book, Skype, twitter, mobile SMS and Whatsapp are the important "communication portal" for social networking, which has greatly changed the way of people for communication. Mobile phones have become the crucial part of our life. Now everybody has his own personal cell phone. Since 1995 mobile phones are developing very fast [2]. They are used not only for messaging and making calls but also can be used in teaching and learning process. The applications of face book, WhatsApp, Skype, SMS, twitter are, the most popular messenger applications among the college students [7].

These technologies are used by a great variety of people, both for professional and social purposes; in particular youth, use these new technologies to communicate and stay connected (Castells, 2007). In today's' society mobile devices prevail in all aspects of our life at home, for leisure, during study and at work. These devices exist in an ever-widening range of computer hardware types and include tablets, smart phones, laptops and net books,. These mobile devices are now considered as essential learning tools [6]. Mobile devices provide many advantages to students (Annan-Coultas, 2006), enable the students to take and edit notes neatly, as well as help in

organizing and structuring them effectively without any messy paper handling (Murray, 2011). Another significant advantage of electronic notes is that it enables the students to search for the concepts and to redefine their structure and note order (Weaver & Nilson, 2005). These notes documents can be synchronized and shared with other mobile devices and can be accessed anywhere (Schepman, Rodway, Beattie, & Lambert, 2012). Furthermore, students can instantly get access to the class material provided by the instructor and they can search and access other online material (Hall & Elliott, 2003). Despite these advantages, there is opposition to the use of mobile devices by students in lectures (Maxwell, 2007; Yamamoto, 2008) due to issues with distractions, lack of discussion in lectures note taking.

Boyd and Ellison (2007, p. 2) have defined social networks as "web-based services that allow individuals to: (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system."

Face book is the most current social network that is widely used. It was originally designed for college students, but is now anyone 13 years of age or older can use it. Its users can create and customize their own profiles with videos, photos, and information about themselves (Conole, 2010). Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 created Face book (at Harvard University. The name for FB came from the publications that some colleges pass out to students at the beginning of the year to help students get to know each other better. FB, now synonymous with social media among school and university students, can be described as the most popular social networking tool in history (Omar, Embi, & Yunus, 2012). It has the highest number of visitors among all the social networking tools available (Facebook, 2012). Like most online social networking sites, FB's mission is to make the world more open and connected (Bosch, 2009). Students may be inherently motivated to feel connected to others within a virtual environment (Cheung & Lee, 2011). The intention of the creation of a virtual community of students is to improve the use of online learning technology (Wang, 2008; Wang & Woo, 2007; Wang et al., 2012).

Due to technological inventions and web based technologies, students have a variety of opportunities for their learning engagement. Students learning engagement involves three major activities: instructions (teachers' notes), assessment (quiz) and feedback. It depends upon student to use the media of their own choice for their learning engagement.

In short we can say that social media is not only playing an important role in informal education but it is also becoming an important source on formal education. It would not be wrong to say that the use of social media in formal education has revolutionized the traditional modes of teaching and learning. Use of social media can play an effective role in student centered self paced learning.

## 2. Objective

The objective of this study is to describe the college students' preferences of technology usage (Skype, Face

book, Twitter, Whatsapp and mobile SMS) for their learning engagement (teachers' notes, quiz and feedback).

## 3. Methodology

This study is based on mixed method of research. All the undergraduate students of district Sialkot were the population of this study. 67 students were randomly selected as the sample for the study. A questionnaire based on seven point Likert scale comprising of 18 statements was distributed to the students. Students were asked to select a media of their choice to be most frequently used from Face book, Skype, twitter, whatsapp, and mobile SMS for their learning engagement of teachers, notes, quiz and feedback. The questionnaire regarding students' preferences of technology usage was personally distributed and collected by the researchers therefore, the response rate of the students was hundred percent. In order to score the data the researchers assigned numbers to the different choices of the students regarding their preferences of technology usage for their learning engagement such as a" Never = 0, A few times a year=1, Monthly= 2, A few times a month=3, Every week=4, A few times a week=5, Every day=6. Frequency and percentage was used to interpret the results of the obtained cumulative scores of the students' responses. To triangulate the data interviews from the students were also conducted by the researchers. The results of interviews support the results obtained from questionnaire.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The results of the qualitative and quantitative data of this study show that almost every student in the public colleges of district Sialkot is well aware of the different communicational portals of social media such as Skype, face book, twitter, whatsapp, messenger and mobile phones etc. They all are using social media for being connected with their friends, family and dear ones. All the students of the public colleges of district Sialkot are well aware of the use of social media in teaching learning process. 45% students preferred Skype to be used daily for their learning engagement while 31% students' preferred face book to be used a by them for their learning engagement. Messenger was the choice of 7% students while 6% students preferred whatsapp for their learning engagement. Twitter was the preference of 7% students. Only 4% students preferred mobile SMS for their learning engagement.

The results of the study also study also suggest that the Skype is the most preferred media for their learning engagement as it has privilege of live calls which can facilitate students in having immediate assistance and guidance from teachers. Moreover they can get quick response and feed back for their performance along with being an effective mode of assessment.

Face book is the second most preferred media for the learning engagement of the students for having access to a large group of people in contact which can provide guidance and assistance in almost every kind of their problems.

Messenger, whatsapp, twitter and mobile SMS were the least preferred media of the students for their learning engagement for having limited opportunities of immediate response and lack of face to face contact.
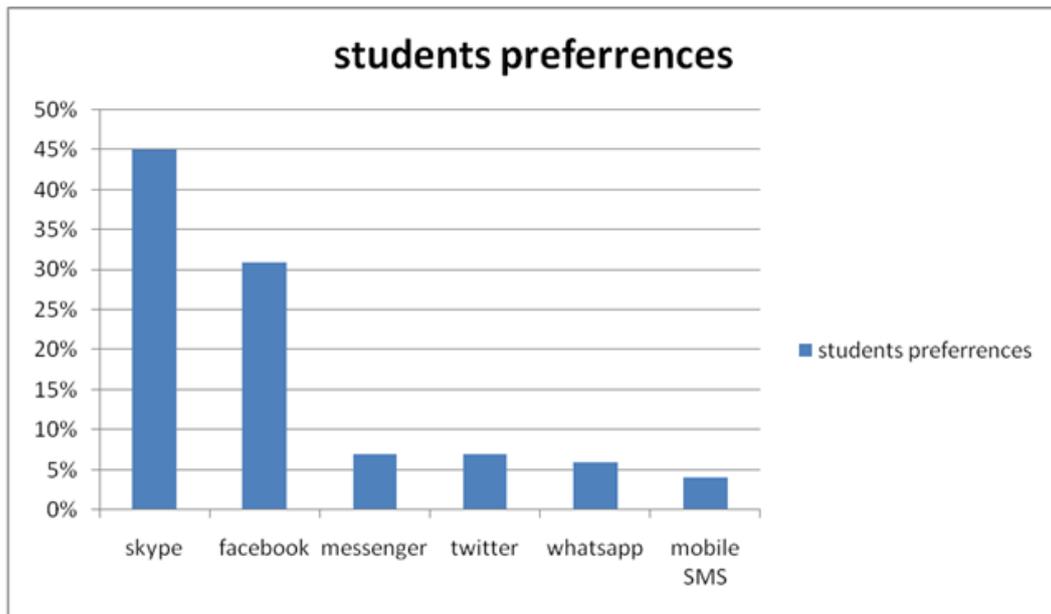


## 5. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of this research, it may be concluded that social media has become an effective form of technology which can be used for the learning engagement of the students. Face book, Twitter, Whatsapp, and mobile SMS can be used for the learning engagement of the students but these forms of technology lack face to face interaction which is necessary to ensure on the spot feedback. Out of different kinds of social media (Skype, Face book, Twitter, Whatsapp and mobile SMS) Skype is the most effective form of technology which majority of the students prefer to be used for their learning engagement as it provides a mode of two way communication from teachers to students and similarly from students to teachers and helps to remove students difficulties in learning by ensuring proper feedback to the them.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the results the researchers suggest that there is a paradigm shift in the role of social media in teaching and learning. The use of social media in teaching and learning is becoming inevitable due to vast range of its facilities and advantages of its use for learning. The use of social media in teaching and learning can make teaching and learning cost effective and self paced learning by providing student centered instruction. World has become a global village and the use of social media in education can help in shaping a global educational system.

The results of this study can be beneficial for the officials working on integrating information and communicational technology in teaching and learning. They can use its findings in reshaping curriculum and renewal of teaching learning process. Being the most preferred media of the students for their learning engagement Skype and face book should be effectively used in teaching learning process in order to meet with the challenges of the new millennium and the demands of ever changing society in this era of information and communicational technology.

## References

[1] Beldarrain, Y. (2006). Distance education trends: Integrating new technologies to foster student interaction and collaboration. Distance Education, 27(2), 139-153.

[2] Chowdhury, R. (2012). Evolution of mobile phones: 1995 – 2012 Retrieved May 19, 2014, from http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/evolution-of-mobile-phones.

[3] Falvo, D. A., & Johnson, B. F. (2007). The use of learning management systems in the United States. TechTrends, 51(2), 40-45.

[4] Ludlow, B. L., & Duff, M. C. (2009). Evolution of distance education at West Virginia University:Past Accomplishments, Present Activities, and Future Plans. Rural Special education Quaterly, Vol. (28), No. (3).

[5] Gunga, S. O., & Ricketts, I. W. (2008). The prospects for e-learning revolution in education: A philosophical analysis. Educational Philosophy and Theory, 40(2), 294-314.

[6] Traxler, J. (2010). Students and mobile devices. ALT-J, Research in Learning Technology, 18 (2), 149-160.

[7] Jadhav, D., Bhutkar, G., & Mehta, V. (2013). Usability evaluation of messenger applications for education, . ALT-J, Research in Learning Technology, 19 (3), 160-169.