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# **Social Media in Teaching and Learning: Going Beyond the Buzz Word**

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## **Introduction**

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies has promoted the creation of many social media tools and they are used for various purposes. In general, the term “social media” refers to tools that permit users to create, share information, ideas and diverse forms of media in virtual networks. They largely cover content sharing communities (e.g., YouTube and Wikipedia) and social networking websites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) that anyone can participate and contribute (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). On a personal basis, these tools are used with the main goal of communicating and sharing personal content such as photos or videos with friends or family members. In terms of education, advocates of connectivism principles, which are based upon Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1963) that emphasises the need to consider social and cultural context in learning, have explained how social media can play a significant role in promoting meaningful and effective learning experiences.

Realising the benefits of these tools in education, many educators have integrated them in their classroom activities and reported positive outcomes (Blankenship, 2011; Chuah & Hong, 2014; Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Roblyer et al., 2010). It is imperative, however, to accept the fact that the tools should not be used due to their novelty or merely trying to impress the learners. Serious considerations are needed before they are to be integrated in any learning environments. In this article, I am sharing several key issues that should be given ample attentions prior to the use of social media tools in teaching and learning.

## **Social Media in Teaching and Learning**

The integration of social media tools in teaching and learning has been widely studied and experimented particularly in the context of higher education. A survey conducted by Moran, Seaman and Tinti-Kane (2011) on faculty members in United States, for example, showed that nearly two-thirds of them have used social media during a class session and more than 30% have posted content for students to view or read outside class using various social media platforms. In addition, Roblyer et al. (2010) found that in higher education, students are more positive towards faculty members who use social media for supporting teaching and learning than those who prefer traditional technologies. Closer to home, the usage of social media among educators in higher education is equally encouraging due to the wider accessibility of Internet facilities among undergraduates and also the on-going national agenda of promoting blended learning, in which lessons are extended virtually through e-learning platforms (Chuah, 2013). The following section highlights some common social media tools that I have used in teaching and learning and they are also widely used by other educators in higher education institutions in Malaysia.