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Using Social Networks in Education

At the modern stage of the society development, there is a mass introduction of information technology in all spheres of human life, including education. Today, social networks are one of the most popular services that keep attention of the majority of the Internet users. Nowadays, they are a universal tool for communication. Moreover, they allow to solve a wide range of tasks in the field of marketing (advertising, promoting etc.) and personnel management. The possibilities of using social networks in education are actively discussed in the world pedagogical community during last years. This paper shares the results of the research aimed at discovering benefits, advantages and disadvantages of social network use in education.

The idea of social networks as a social group of researchers were proposed by Emilie Durkheim and Ferdinand Tonnies in the late 1890s, who thought that social groups can exist as a personal and social links between individuals who share their values and beliefs. In a century, with the development of the Internet as a global system of interconnected computers, this idea has found its application in modern social networks which are often referred to as a website that brings people together to talk, share their ideas, interests and news as well as to find and to make friends, being in the virtual environment and communicating via the Internet. They are no more groups of the researchers, but virtual community of individuals.

The range of the purposes of social network use is wide: from personal needs for communication to the desire to develop professionally and grow personally. Social networks can be seen as a good marketing tool which allows to advertise, promote and make a brand not only goods or services, but individuals themselves by creating their Profiles how they would like to be seen by others. Apart from successful marketing business, social networks contribute to promoting education and personal development via e-learning and communicating.

Indeed, over the last decade there is a great change in the ways and forms of people's communication via the Internet, and social networks, in particular. The most popular social networks «Facebook » (at the international level) and« VKontakte » (at the CIS countries' level) meet the needs of the Ukrainian youth and adults in prompt and quick interaction and communication as well as in building their own learning or working space with the help of these publicly available social tools.

Study possibilities by using social networks for education are rooted in the theory of social learning, the assumption that people learn most affectively when they interact with their peers on a topic or within a subject. Strong evidence of the need for social interaction in the learning process is set out in the study of Richard J. Light of Harvard, who discovered that one of the strongest factors in the success of students in

education is their ability to create or participate in small research groups. Students who studied in groups at least once a week were better prepared in the subject than students who were engaged by their own. Experience of being a student and undergoing such patterns of interaction also proves this.

From my perspective, in social education the focus of teachers' attention should be shifted from sharing the content of the subject in a learning activity to giving a task which needs interaction of people around the content being located in groups. That is the reason of foreign experts in the field of e-learning to have encouraged software developers to create LMS (Learning Management System) being integrated with popular social services

Analyzing the international and national experience of using social networks in education from the perspective of students, we can point out the following benefits arguments in favor of their application

1. Social networks are **free to use**. So, there is no need in buying special software for storing digital data if not to open the university network. Moreover, all social networks are accessible for free.

2. **Easy to use**. Students are more involved in social networks than in any other web resources. Many teachers are familiar with and use of various learning management systems, but usually students appear there rarely only when necessary, while they drop in social networks several times a day.

3. **Easy to be engaged** in the classroom work. Supporting the training course with the use of a social network allows students who miss classroom classes to follow academic work in the classroom and take part in it online, being at a distance.

4. **Asynchronous work** gives the possibility of constant interaction of students and teachers in the network in the time more convenient that provides the continuity of the learning process.

However, there are some problems of introducing social networks in education process: additional efforts to organize and support the learning process by providing continuing teacher training; possible lack of open access to social networks of universities; the presence of some factors distracting students from learning activity (rapid information flow, abundance of entertainment content etc.).

Undoubtedly, social networks are becoming a full-fledged educational environment, but it is necessary to examine the educational possibilities of social networks thoroughly to overcome the problems by developing specialized applications for social networks, which can expand the opportunities for organizing and managing the learning process, that is possible by common efforts of IT specialists and educators.