Using Social Media Tools for Collaborative Learning: A Mixed-Method Investigation on Academic Group Work by iSchool Students around the World

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative learning helps university students improve their academic achievement, learning persistence and attitudes (Springer et al., 1999). Social media were found to have positive effects on collaborative learning by encouraging positive interactions online (Al-Rahmi et al., 2014; Thalluri & Penman, 2015). This mixed-method dissertation research investigates how social media tools help to facilitate collaborative learning activities of iSchools students around the world. It included an online survey (Phase I) with over 300 iSchool students from 26 iSchools in 9 countries/regions, followed by 31 in-depth interviews (Phase II). The focal areas of the investigation are: 1) the factors influencing iSchools students' selection of social media tools; 2) the needed features and functions of social media for collaborative learning activities; 3) collaboration and communication strategies of iSchools students; and 4) the impacts of design characteristics, usability, and UX aspects of the social media tools on iSchools students' collaborative learning. The preliminary analysis results revealed that both effective social media functions and students' high proficiency of using social media tools were vital for a successful collaboration, however it was unlikely that both were present to achieve successful collaborative learning.

This dissertation research fills the gap of the research studies on collaborative learning using social media tools and usability requirements associated with using social media for learning purposes. In the long run, the study results provide evidence for improving the design of group assignments and team-based projects for collaborative learning in iSchools and beyond.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

social computing; user interfaces; scholarly communications; education; students

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

social media; collaborative learning; iSchool; user experience