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“Connectivism” as a theoretical framework underpinning social media usage for higher education in the digital age – A scoping review

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Background

A key trend in the current higher education is the usage of social media in teaching and learning. The integration of social media into formal education should be accompanied by a sound theoretical framework, in order to provide a meaningful education. “Connectivism”, is a learning theory that intends to explain how learning occurs in the digital age. The eight

principles of connectivism explains how learning occurs through formation of connections with information sources.

Objectives

The objectives of this scoping review were to examine how connectivism has been used to incorporate social media into higher education and understand the impact of social media usage, with connectivism as the theoretical framework on the success of student learning.

Methods

Nine databases were searched for eligible publications including, SCOPUS, EBSCOhost, Emerald, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis, PubMed (MEDLINE), ERIC, ACM and IEEE Xplore. The search was conducted from February, 2022 to April, 2022. The review was limited to publications in English language. The search retrieved 1560 records of which 23 articles were selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The studies which were conducted in higher education sector incorporating social media in the teaching and learning process according to the principles of connectivism were included in the review. The review was limited to publications in English language.

Results

13% of studies reported improved academic performance, 13% promoted self-regulation of learning, 17% provided an open and flexible learning environment, 30% enhanced interactions with peers and teachers and 35% fostered collaborative learning as outcomes of using social media in while using connectivism as the theoretical framework. Social media has been used as a platform to encourage communication outside the traditional face-to-face classroom, provided a learning platform where students can easily manage academic resources and has helped to transform the student from passive consumer of knowledge to active social learner.

Conclusion

Bringing connectivism to higher education is a method to incorporate, social media that students use to learn, communicate and socialize in this digital age, to formal education. The successful integration of principles of connectivism into social media usage in higher education has a positive impact on students’ learning and promotes collaborative learning.