

INTRODUCTION TO “THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ONLINE EDUCATION” STREAM

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Welcome to the social media stream of the *International Journal of Innovations in Online Education*, which aims to reconceptualize and rethink the use of the social web to support learning, whether that learning be formal or informal. Papers in this stream are focused on presenting conceptual and empirical approaches to different teaching and learning issues that utilize the social web while deepening reflection in this area both in formal and informal learning contexts, combining synergies of researchers and experts of different nationalities, who are developing activities and knowledge in these open learning spaces.

This stream acknowledges that learning can and does occur in a continuous network in which knowledge is acquired through collaboration with the community in order to solve the problems at hand. Collaborative web-based applications support the collective construction of knowledge and social networks are often used in the collaboration and/or sharing of the artifacts. Collaborative networked learning is critically important in the support of lifelong learning and has offered the opportunity to access and build knowledge through social networks. Spaces with interfaces that are open to collaboration, co-construction, co-authoring, co-partnership, and collective knowledge become places where vibrant co-learning can be nurtured and developed.

Focused mainly on the analysis of the teaching and learning process in network, this allows us to regard the 21st century education as open, flexible, and inclusive. Open, because it enables us to expand large-scale learning using, to this end, the OER, which include materials, software, and applications for educational purposes and with open licenses, and open online courses based on network, activities, and content. Flexible, because learning takes place through mobile devices and integrated and distributed resources, which allows it to take place anytime and anywhere through smartphones, tablets, or laptops. Finally, inclusive, because social networks have become inclusive, informal learning spaces where every citizen has the opportunity to reuse, reconstruct, and redistribute knowledge.

SOCIAL MEDIA STREAM EDITORS

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Whitney teaches at the University of North Texas (UNT) and is the Chief Academic Officer at iDesign, a higher education service company. At iDesign, Whitney leads a team of learning designers in the development of online programs for the company's university partners. She earned her PhD at the University of North Texas in Learning Technologies. Whitney is also a researcher working with [Columbia University and the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia on The Role of Research in Higher Ed Decision-Making](#).

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Sue is a Senior Lecturer in Business Information Systems and Technology within the Department of Computing at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK, a National Teaching Fellow, a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and a Fellow of the Staff and Educational Development Association. Her research interests include the use of social media in higher education, digital identity, and the use of technology to enhance learning and teaching. She has a number of publications and has given many invited keynote presentations in this area. Sue holds an MSc in Technology Enhanced Learning Innovation and Change, an MA in Communication and Media Studies, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, all from Sheffield Hallam University.