Social media and social work students: the boundaries just got more complicated

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Thinking about…

Three or four images here

~ social media
~ open university & distance learning
~ areas of professional practice: social work, educators

BA (Honours) Social Work (England)

Social workers support and protect some of society’s most deprived and vulnerable people. It’s immensely challenging and rewarding work, requiring a high level of motivation and commitment. You also need a qualifying degree. The OU’s BA (Honours) Social Work (England) is approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), and successful completion entitles you to apply for registration as a social
“Data …suggests that the wide availability, accessibility and affordances of social media create alternative learning options for some distance learners.

Some distance learners are actively and deliberately using popular, non-institutional social media tools to augment and extend their learning experiences”

Andrews, Tynan & Backstrom (2012) ‘Distance learners’ use of non-institutional social media to augment and enhance their learning experience’
Themes from the literature

- Digital natives v. digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001), Net Generation (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005)

- Social media’s technological affordances: social, administrative or learning? (Arteaga Sanchez et al, 2013)

- The importance of understanding the student voice, to influence the institutional response (Andrews & Tynan, 2012)

- Distance learning: interaction between learners, as well as between learners and teachers, mediated by technology but VLE or PLE? (Keegan, 2008)

- Social networking tools: ownership of learning, the role of tutors, barriers to integration with pedagogy (Manca & Ranieri, 2012)
Research questions

1. Using what methods do students find it helpful to communicate with each other and their tutor?

2. Which social media do students use?

3. What do students use social media for?

4. In what ways do students view their use of social media as augmenting or partially replacing the University’s Tutor Group Forum provision?
Q1: Using what methods do students find it helpful to communicate with each other and their tutor?

Tasks

• finding out information relevant to their studies,

• contacting their tutor,

• getting help from fellow students to understand module related concepts,

• staying in touch socially with fellow students,

• working with fellow students on module related tasks,

• sharing resources
Q2: Which social media do students use?

How often?

Never....

Once every few days

On a daily basis
Q3: What do students use social media for?

1st: Finding out information relevant to my studies
2nd: Contacting my tutor
3rd: Getting help from fellow students to understand module ideas & content
4th: Staying in touch socially with fellow students
5th: Working with fellow students on module related tasks
6th: Sharing resources

Other
Q4. In what ways do students view their use of social media as augmenting or partially replacing the University’s Tutor Group Forum provision?

Because I use social media in my daily life, I find it easier to carry on using this in my study rather than the TGF.

I think the University should replace TGFs with social media entirely.

The TGF has contributed more to me successfully studying this module than using social media has.
Social media and social work practice: students’ views

Positive views

✓ Useful way to make contact with service users…….. Is that okay?
✓ Useful way to find out information about service users…..Is that ethical?
✓ Useful to provide information to service users……..Access issues?
✓ Useful for keeping up to date with developments in practice ….. Yes!

Concerns

- Boundary issues/ confidentiality
- Not appropriate for communication with service users
- Prefer to use an alternative tool
- Traditional methods effective, don’t need social media
- Hostility online
Linking themes from research
Social media: an opportunity for all?

Marion Russell
@PCFSWCornwall
Principal Child and Family Social Worker - Cornwall, Chair of PCFSW National Network - TCSW, Part-time Prof Doc student at Cardiff University

Brian Norris
@memorytriggers
Social entrepreneurs creating archive film based #memorytrigger resources for older people, #dementia patients and carers to aid #reminiscence Dementia Friends.

Hannah Lucy Ide
@hannahlucyxox

Woofability
@Woofability2
Official account for Woofability, who train assistance and support dogs for the disabled and children with Autism and Downs Syndrome.

Social Work Ops
@RobMitch92
Service Manager & Principal Social Worker Loves Social Work nearly as much as LUFC, GAIS, wife & kids. Tweets are mine or pinched from someone clevererer.
Suggestions

• Social media can be used by educators both to facilitate students’ learning of traditional social work curriculum and to prepare them for using social media in professional practice.

• Students need to make the link between their use of social media in their personal life, during their studies and in their professional practice.

• Service users and social workers need to consider ways social media use can develop and strengthen the relationship between each other and the organisations they work with or for.
Conclusions

• Students in the study used a variety of methods to communicate during their studies including face to face, email, phone, text and social media

• The most popular social media used was Facebook

• Social media was used for a variety of tasks including
  • finding out information relevant to their studies,
  • getting help from fellow students to understand module related concepts,
  • staying in touch socially with fellow students,

• University provided communication & learning technologies remain very important to students in supporting them during their studies. Social media is an addition not a replacement.
Thank you for listening

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