



SOCIAL MEDIA EDUCATION ACCES FOR ALL

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Social media channels facilitate dialogue, discussion and questioning
- Connect with likeminded people who share your passions and want to learn more
- Embed learning into everyday activities

FIND OUT MORE FROM OUP

- Report on Facebook for language learning

More opinions, case studies and stories at www.opening-up.eu/socialmedia

Ever since the days of Socrates, the best models of education build on two-way dialogue. Question and answer, debate and discuss, the teacher encourages her students to explore ideas. Passing on her knowledge is just a small part of her work; she also nurtures her students passion and skills for learning.

If quality education relies on conversation and connectivity between the student and teacher, then social media technologies are full of great promise. Now you can take debate beyond the physical confines of the classroom. You can follow your favourite thought leaders on Twitter; you can debate topics with others and draw on their knowledge and resources. Twitter and YouTube have become many people's primary source for learning, whether they have specific questions or seek continuous professional development.

Crowdsourcing in education is a relatively new concept, but it seems to be a model that works. Instead of having an expert teacher delivering knowledge to 'ignorant' students, the crowdsourcing approach requires critical mass. If enough people get together, they can all share their limited expertise for the benefit of all. With enough participants, collective 'self-help' is a powerful tool.

The Opening Up project has explored a variety of ways to use social media for educational purposes. Just as networking and communication technologies have helped to 'open up' government and business to citizens and customers, social media channels 'open up' education to everyone.

Age, language, location, disability and finance are no longer barriers to learning. All it takes is a willingness to connect and engage.

NAME: Wim Oostindier, Hanze University of Applied Sciences
MUNICIPALITY: Groningen , Netherlands

FACEBOOK FOR LANGUAGES

Many students in our International Business School spend their third year abroad in a Spanish-speaking country. They have just 18 months to master the language, often starting from scratch.

We realised that textbooks and compulsory classes tend to take away the enjoyment and often the motivation for learning. So we decided to use Facebook instead. Students are using Facebook all the time, so we thought we could make learning Spanish just part of what they do every day, like sharing videos and liking posts from friends.

I created a page with news feeds in Spanish from a variety of top sources. They covered hot social media topics, plus subjects included in the curriculum: Obama, the Euro crisis, travelling, skiing, Catalonia, etc. Students could comment on stories – in Spanish – and share their links. I used comments and posts from students to evaluate their language skills and inform my lessons and assignments.

The page had 240 'likes' by the end of the year. Although using the Facebook page was not compulsory, feedback from students in class was very positive. Although students were wary of interacting much with teachers in their personal social networks, the pages stimulated excellent class discussions.

This trial demonstrated that Facebook is embraced by students as an educational tool and in creating a positive learning culture.



**Høje-Taastrup
Kommune**

CAPTION: Høje-Taastrup, Denmark

The municipality of Høje-Taastrup set up three interest groups on a shared intranet for local teachers to share their ideas and support their continuous professional development.

The groups have flourished and a large proportion of the city's 550 public sector teachers are now members. The largest group (over 350 members) focuses on the use of IT in education.

Most teachers are 'lurkers' in discussions, receiving group mails, but not participating in discussions or sharing resources. The success of interest groups tends to rest on a few key individuals who generate regular – but not too much – traffic to make the groups worthwhile.

WHAT MAKES SOCIAL MEDIA SO GREAT FOR LEARNING?

- Stumble upon unorganized and informal learning opportunities
- Enhance knowledge and skills 'on the fly'
- Connect learning with your personal life – make learning a lifetime habit
- Pick up unexpected knowledge
- Introduction to new ideas and areas of interest
- Direct access to teachers, classmates and peers
- Ideal for peer-to-peer mentoring

