The use of social media
for democratic participation (SOCMED)

Social Media for Teaching and Learning

by

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Social Media for Teaching and Learning

Brief description

This training unit focuses on teachers' use of social media on a personal and professional level. It presents three 2-hour sessions, starting with low level entry activities that address the actual use of social media by the participants. The training unit then encourages participants to explore how social media can be used in the classroom as part of the teaching and learning process. It also encourages them to explore ways in which social media is being used for democratic participation and how this can be harnessed in the classroom. The activities are aimed at a group of 20 to 25 teachers working with secondary and high school students.

Expected outcomes

- ✓ Participants gain a deeper understanding of the possibilities that social media offer for democratic participation.
- ✓ Participants' willingness to work together with others and become actively involved will be developed (A_COOP_2).
- ✓ Participants' readiness to learn from challenges will be developed (A_SELF_5).
- ✓ Participants' ability to learn in a variety of ways from participation in groups will be developed (S_COOP_1).
- ✓ Participants' aptitude to cope with complex issues and to avoid one dimensional answers will be supported (S_EPIST_1).

Activities

	Duration	Methods used
Activity 1 Social Media	120 minutes	Icebreaker, Discussion, Placemat Activity, Plenary, Debriefing, Online Reflection.
Activity 2 Social Media for Teaching and Learning	120 minutes	Online work, Group work, Brainstorming, Plenary, Online Reflection.
Activity 3 Democratic Participation	100 minutes	Group work, Online Collaboration, Plenary
Evaluation	20 minutes	Controversial Debate

Background and context

The use of social media by people in all walks of life has been on the increase for some years, and in some instances social media now permeates the fabric of society. The inherent power of social media is perhaps underestimated in the classroom context.

This training unit was originally piloted with teachers of geography in Slovenia as part of the Pestalozzi Module "The Use of Social Media for Democratic Participation", but it can be easily adapted to a more general audience. It includes the use of a virtual space in which participants can reflect on the issues raised and their own practice through the use of social media. It is understood that the trainer will encourage active participation in this virtual space by interacting actively with the participants. While this is an inherent part of the training unit, the activities also stand alone. Activities may also be broken down into smaller, separate activities.

The training unit is primarily aimed at educators with only a basic knowledge of social media but even experienced users tend to gain, especially through interacting in the virtual space created for the purpose.

Activity 1: Social Media

Duration: 120 min

Expected outcomes
- ✓ Participants understand what social media is.
- ✓ Participants explore how they use social media.
- ✓ Participants become familiar with the virtual space that will be used for reflection.

Methods/techniques used
- ✓ Icebreaker
- ✓ Discussion
- ✓ Placemat Activity
- ✓ Plenary
- ✓ Debriefing
- ✓ Online Reflection

Resources
- ✓ A virtual space set up for the group – a blog, a Facebook group or any other virtual space that may be available depending on the context.
- ✓ A list of statements (Appendix 1).
- ✓ Flipchart paper and coloured pens.
- ✓ A large open space where participants can move freely.
- ✓ Post-it notes.

Practical arrangements
- ✓ The activity calls for a large open space with a flexible seating arrangement that will change throughout its duration.

Procedure

Step 1 - Icebreaker (10 min)

- ✓ Invite participants to stand in a line. The trainer reads a number of statements and participants are invited to step forward every time the statement is applicable to them.

✓ This activity will provide the trainer with a quick overview of where the group stands in terms of the use of social media and it will also help create a fun and safe atmosphere.

✓ The statements should be a mixture of neutral fun statements and some that are directly related to the topic. See Appendix 1 for sample statements.

Step 2 – Introduction (20 min)

✓ Introduce the topic in general.

✓ Introduce the virtual space that will be used for reflection purposes and encourage participants to actively use this space throughout the duration of the training, to reflect and share good practices. The trainer may need to explain how to access and use this virtual space.

Step 3 – What Do We Understand by Social Media? (20 min)

✓ Ask the participants to sit in two concentric circles with the participants sitting in the inner circle facing outwards and the participants sitting in the outer circle facing inwards so that two participants are facing each other.

✓ Ask participants what they understand by the term "social media" and invite them to discuss this with the person sitting opposite them.

✓ After a few minutes, invite one of the circles to move one place in either direction. Invite participants to continue discussing the question with the new person sitting in front of them.

✓ This step is repeated a number of times, with the same circle moving one space in the same direction so that participants interact with at least three or four other participants.

✓ Provide a basic definition of the term "social media" – websites or applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Invite participants to comment on this definition in view of the discussion that they have just had.

Step 4 – How Do We Use Social Media? (40 min)

✓ Divide participants into micro-groups of four using any grouping method. One suggestion would be to have the participants line up according to some criteria (age, height, month in which they were born, names in alphabetical order, countries of origin in alphabetical order). The first four participants in line make up the first group, the second four participants make up the second group, and so on.

✓ Distribute markers and flip chart paper.

✓ Ask participants to create an individual writing area on the edges and a group writing area in the centre of the paper. The resulting "placemat" should look like the diagram below. In case of a group with an odd number of participants, the shape in the middle and number of spaces at the edges will need to be adjusted accordingly, a triangle for a three person team or a pentagon for a five person team.
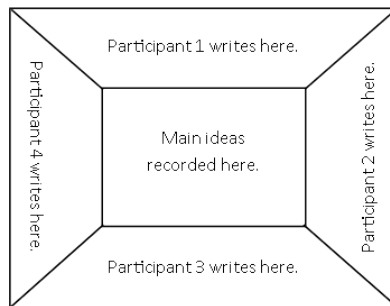
✓ Ask the participants to identify the ways in which they use social media and to record this in their respective writing area.

✓ Participants are invited to colour code their entries to differentiate between personal and professional use of social media.

✓ Each participant in the micro-group takes it in turn to share his/her list with the rest of the micro-group.

✓ In micro-groups, participants discuss the list and create a general list that is recorded in the centre section.

✓ Each micro-group shares the list with the other micro-groups in plenary.

✓ Invite the participants to reflect on the definition of social media and how they are using social media as individuals and as professionals in education. Are they creating, sharing, participating or doing something else altogether?

✓ Ask the participants to transfer their list from the placemat activity onto post-its. The participants are then asked to stick the post-it notes on larger flipchart paper which bear the three headings – creating, sharing and participating. Are there some uses that do not fall under any of these three categories?

✓ Challenge some decisions or ask for clarifications.

Step 5 – Debriefing (30 min)

✓ Invite participants to reflect on the activity in plenary and later in the virtual space.

- Which parts of the activity were easy? Why?
- Is the general definition of "social media" clear and acceptable?
- How is social media different from other forms of media?
- Given the widespread use of social media by the younger generations,

what is the role of educators in this scenario?

- As educators, to what extent do we need to know about social media?
- Do we need to use social media in order to be able to educate about it?
- To what extent can social media enhance teaching and learning? In what ways?
- Is there more to social media other than just finding material that may enhance a lesson? How?
- What are the risks involved in the use of social media as individuals/professionals?
- Are these risks worth it?

Tips for trainers
  ✓ A "getting to know each other" ice breaking activity may be required if the participants do not know each other.
  ✓ Experienced users of social media may find parts of this activity superfluous. Adapt activity accordingly, allowing more time for discussion.
  ✓ Debriefing questions and links to social media sites should be shared in the virtual space.

Activity 2: Social Media for Teaching and Learning

Duration: 120 min

Expected outcomes
  ✓ Participants retrieve material from social media and share it in the designated virtual space.
  ✓ Participants look beyond the immediate material and across subject areas.
  ✓ Participants explore the notion of democratic participation.
  ✓ Participants discuss ways in which social media can be used for democratic participation.

Methods/techniques used
  ✓ Online work
  ✓ Group work
  ✓ Brainstorming
  ✓ Plenary

Resources
- ✓ Computers with access to the web.
- ✓ Flipchart paper or board.

Practical arrangements
- ✓ Space where participants can work individually.
- ✓ Space where participants can work in small groups.
- ✓ Open space where plenary can be held.

Procedure

Step 1 – Retrieving Material (20 minutes)
- ✓ Ask participants to search a social media site of their choice and identify one potential resource that they can use in the classroom context.
- ✓ Invite them to post a link to this resource in the virtual space and to give a brief explanation as to how they could potentially use this in a specific teaching and learning context.
- ✓ Invite participants to reflect and eventually comment on at least some of these resources in their own time.

Step 2 – Looking beyond (40 min)
- ✓ Divide the group into micro-groups of four (see Activity 1 for grouping ideas).
- ✓ Ask each micro-group to select one resource from the ones identified in Step 1 above.
- ✓ Invite the participants to go back to the original source and look at the resource in the context of the social media. Direct participants' attention to the number of likes, shares, comments and discuss the specific resource within the bigger context.
- ✓ In micro-groups participants discuss possible ways in which this "background" material can be used in the teaching and learning process, if at all.
- ✓ Each micro-group presents a short summary of their discussion in plenary.

Step 3 – Social Media and Democratic Participation (40 min)
- ✓ Invite participant to discuss the notion of democratic participation. What is understood by democratic participation?
- ✓ How can the use of social media support democratic participation? Ask for specific examples that participants have either come across, know about or can envisage.

✓ Ask them to list and group these examples on flipchart paper or board. The list may include campaigns, polls, surveys, providing feedback, raising awareness, petitions, etc.

✓ Invite the participants to surf any social media site of their choice trying to identify examples of the use of social media for democratic participation from the list created.

✓ In plenary, participants are invited to share their thoughts and impressions of the examples found and how these can potentially be used in or adapted to the classroom setting.

Step 4 – Debriefing (20 min)

✓ Invite participants to reflect on the activity in plenary and later in the virtual space.

- Has your understanding of the use of social media for democratic participation changed as a result of this activity?
- Was there anything that you were not expecting or that came as a surprise?
- Are resources found on social media necessarily subject specific?
- Do you have a clear understanding of the ways in which social media can be used in the classroom?
- Are the processes involved in democratic participation through the use of social media transferrable to the classroom context?

Tips for trainers

✓ Debriefing questions and links to resources should be shared in the virtual space.

✓ Looking beyond the resources that are so freely available on social media sites and harnessing their potential in the classroom is the most challenging aspect of this activity.

✓ In Step 2, examples may be provided to reinforce the notion of resources in their original context. Upload these in the designated virtual space.

Activity 3: Democratic Participation

Duration: 100 min

Expected outcome
✓ Participants explore ideas in which social media for democratic participation can be used in their own contexts.

Methods/techniques used
✓ Group Work
✓ Online Collaboration
✓ Plenary

Resources
✓ Different kinds of sweets in a bag.
✓ Computers with access to the virtual space.

Practical arrangements
✓ Space for participants to work in micro-groups.

Procedure

Step 1 - Icebreaker (5 min)
✓ Divide the group into micro-groups of four. One way of doing this is to put different kinds of sweets in a bag. You will need four each for as many groups as you need, for example, four chocolates, four toffees, four lollipops, etc. Ask participants to choose a sweet and to get into groups based upon the type of sweet they have.

Step 2 – Create an Activity (75 min)
✓ In micro-groups, invite participants to come up with an activity that they can use in their own context, using social media for democratic participation.
✓ Participants need to clearly indicate how social media will be used to encourage democratic participation in their own specific context.
✓ Ask each micro-group to upload the activity in the virtual space.
✓ Advise the participants that, as a micro-group, they must now look at all the activities and ask for clarifications or provide feedback in the virtual space. In order to be able to accomplish this in a limited time, each participant in each micro-group will be responsible to look at one activity and then he or she will need to report back to the micro-group.
✓ In micro-groups, participants answer any questions or react to the feedback received in the virtual space.

Step 3 – Debriefing (20 min)
- ✓ The trainer invites participants to reflect on the activity:
  - What was the most challenging part of this activity?
  - What do you think about the methodology?
  - Can you ensure democratic participation through the activity you have planned?

Tips for trainers
- ✓ Debriefing questions should be shared in the virtual space.
- ✓ If the virtual space is not being used, participants can be invited to create a poster instead. The posters can be passed from one group to the next with each group asking questions or providing feedback on post-it notes which are stuck on the poster. The posters will eventually go back to their original micro-group. Participants should then be given time to react to the questions and feedback in plenary.
- ✓ Micro-groups may need to be based on the contexts from which participants come.

Activity 4: Evaluation

Duration: 20 min

Expected outcome
- ✓ Participants reflect on their personal and professional growth.

Methods/ techniques used
- ✓ Controversial Debate

Resources
- ✓ "Agree" and "Disagree" signs. See Appendix 2.
- ✓ A list of statements based on the activities. See Appendix 3.

Practical arrangements
- ✓ A large open space in which participants can move from one side to the other.

Procedure

Step 1 (15 min)
- ✓ Identify two opposite areas in the space. Stick the sign saying "Agree" on one side and the sign saying "Disagree" on the opposite side.
- ✓ Ask participants to stand in a line in the centre of the designated space with "Agree" on one side and "Disagree" on the other side.
- ✓ Announce that for every statement read, participants need to take a stand on the continuum between "Agree" and "Disagree".
- ✓ Read out the statements.
- ✓ After each statement is read, invite participants to take a position along the continuum.
- ✓ Asks participants at random to justify their stance.
- ✓ Invite participants to move either way should the arguments brought forward convince them to do so.

Step 2 – Debriefing (5 min)

- ✓ Was it always easy to take a position along the continuum?

Tips for trainers
- ✓ Add statements as necessary depending on the way discussions develop throughout the training.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Race for the Truth Statements

- I feel good.
- I am very happy to be here.
- I am under the age of 30.
- I am under the age of 40.
- I have as much hair now as I had 10 years ago.
- I play sport or exercise on a regular basis.
- I spend a lot of time on the internet.
- I know about social media.
- I have a good knowledge of social media and the way they work.
- I am on social media.
- I have a Facebook account.
- I create and share material on social media.
- I am looking forward to deepening my understanding of the role social media plays in promoting democratic participation.

Add more statements as necessary and depending on the group.

Appendix 2

AGREE

DISAGREE

Appendix 3

Agree/Disagree Statements

- This training course has helped deepen my understanding of social media in general.
- I feel more confident about using social media in general.
- I believe social media can promote democratic participation.
- I believe social media can promote democratic participation in the classroom.
- The methodology used throughout this training course encouraged democratic participation.
- This training course has helped me to look beyond the obvious.
- I will use ideas from this training course in my daily practice.
- There is no time or space for social media or democratic participation in the classroom.

Add more statements as necessary and based on the discussions throughout the training course.