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The use of social media  
for democratic participation (SOCMED)

Participation of teachers and young  
people in social media:  
Is it democratic?  
by

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## Participation of teachers and young people in social media: Is it democratic?

### Brief description

The activities in this training unit (TU) give material for a four-hour training session on how to use social media for democratic participation in the classroom. The target group of the training is high school teachers.

**Keywords:** Social media, virtual spaces, high school teachers, democratic participation.

### Expected outcomes

- ✓ Participants will understand the importance of social virtual spaces for educational practices.
- ✓ Participants will identify the negative aspects of online social spaces and generate ideas on how to change these to serve the promotion of good practices of respectful behaviour.
- ✓ Participants will become competent in dealing with online communication.
- ✓ Participants will acquire knowledge about the field of social media and democratic participation and how to use it with young people.
- ✓ Participants will know how to develop practical activities involving both teachers and students for active online participation.

### Activities

	Duration	Methods used
Activity 1: Exploring the field	60 minutes	Icebreaker and group work
Activity 2: Controversial debate	40 minutes	Debate
Activity 3: Pros and cons in different social media	90 minutes	Individual work and group work
Activity 4: Evaluation	30 minutes	Plenary discussion and individual work

### Background and context

The present TU was developed by Vitor Manuel Nabais Tomé and piloted on 14 middle school teachers in a in-service teacher training workshop called "Participation of teachers and young people on social media: is it democratic?" from December 10<sup>th</sup> to February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The development of the TU took place in Portugal. The great asset of this training was the opportunity teachers had to discuss the use of social networking with students, to understand attitudes, benefits and fears of students towards social media.

## Activity 1: Exploring the field and getting to know each other

Duration: 60 minutes

<p>Expected outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Participants will learn about basic concepts of social media and what they mean to them.</li> <li>✓ Willingness to work together with others and become actively involved (A_COOP_2)</li> <li>✓ Understanding of the subjective nature of all knowledge of self and others (K_SELF_2)</li> <li>✓ Knowledge about the relationship of self and group (K_SELF_3)</li> <li>✓ Self-knowledge and introspection (K_SELF_1)</li> </ul>
<p>Methods/ techniques used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Icebreaker</li> <li>✓ Group work</li> </ul>
<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Flipchart paper</li> <li>✓ Different coloured markers</li> <li>✓ Audio equipment</li> <li>✓ Projector</li> </ul>
<p>Practical arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Open space</li> <li>✓ Tables for group work</li> <li>✓ Find a lively song on YouTube to encourage participants to play.</li> </ul>
<p>Procedure</p> <p>Step 1 (20 min): <b>Getting to know each other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Play music and ask participants to walk around the room freely.</li> <li>✓ Stop the music and ask participants to form pairs and introduce themselves to each other and discuss what social media means to them for 4 minutes. Tell them to respect the timeframe and divide the time equally between each member of the group.</li> <li>✓ Play the music again and ask participants to walk again freely around the room.</li> <li>✓ Stop the music and ask participants to form groups of three but not with the same participants as before.</li> <li>✓ Ask participants in the trios to introduce themselves to their new group members and discuss who uses social media for 3 minutes. Repeat the rule of respecting the time and distribution equally between each member of the group.</li> <li>✓ Play the music again and ask participants to walk again around the room.</li> <li>✓ Stop the music and ask them to form micro-groups of four but not with the same people that they grouped with before.</li> <li>✓ Ask them to introduce themselves to the new partners and discuss why people use social media.</li> <li>✓ Tell the groups to keep on working together in step 2.</li> </ul> <p>Step 2 (20 min): <b>Poster session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Distribute posters and markers and ask the groups to create one poster that summaries their discussion and main conclusions in step 1. They can either draw or write.</li> <li>✓ Give each group 2 minutes to share the outcome and present the poster in plenary.</li> </ul>

Step 3 (20 min): **Debriefing**

- ✓ What was the aim of this activity?
- ✓ How many names do you know by now?
- ✓ What is your understanding of social media?
- ✓ Was there a consensus within the group about what social media is?
- ✓ In what ways do you use social media in your everyday life?
- ✓ How can social media add to our learning?
- ✓ How can social media support learning processes?
- ✓ How can social media be used for democratic participation?
- ✓ Describe how you felt when walking around and meeting people and how you felt when you had to put down your conclusions on the poster.

## Activity 2: Controversial debate

Duration: 40 minutes

Expected outcome

- ✓ Recognition of the importance of handling controversial issues and acceptance of the associated risks (A\_EPIST\_5)

Methods/ techniques used

- ✓ Debate

Resources

- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Two A4 size sheets, one marked "Agree" and the other "Disagree".

Practical arrangements

- ✓ Open space

Procedure

Step 1 (30 min): **Let's debate**

- ✓ Draw a line in the middle of the room with a masking tape and place the paper marked "Agree" on right side of the room and the "Disagree" on the left side.
- ✓ Gather participants in the middle of the room.
- ✓ Read the following statements one by one and invite participants to take a position in line with their opinion about each statement. The participants who agree with the statements go to the right side of the room while the participants who disagree go to the left side of the room. Tell them that those who place themselves the furthest to the right agree completely and those who will go as far as possible to the left disagree completely. Tell them also that it is fine to change their opinion.
- ✓ After everyone has taken their position give some of them the opportunity to explain their position. It can be interesting to ask for the opinion of those participants that have placed themselves very far from each other as well as those who are in the middle. If someone changes their position, ask for an explanation. Try to encourage participants to justify their position and support their arguments.
- ✓ Read out the statements below one by one and allow time for people to think and walk to the place that indicates their degree of agreement. Interview a few participants after each statement.
  - I do not use social networks.
  - In the social networks that I use most often, I'm usually a silent observer.
  - In the social networks that I use most often, I usually look for information to read, watch or listen to.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the social networks that I use most often, I only like the content.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use most often, I publish messages (text, picture, video and / or audio).</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use the most, I share text pictures, video and audio with friends.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use the most, I share text pictures, video and audio with strangers.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I actively participate in conversations.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I usually express my honest opinions.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I chat with friends.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I chat with strangers.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I worry about the idea that other people can illegally enter my page.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I intervene when I see hate speech.</li> <li>• In the social networks that I use, I intervene when I see cyber bullying.</li> <li>• I'm more careful in online virtual spaces than in face to face interactions.</li> <li>• In the social network that I use, I set up my account regarding confidentiality.</li> <li>• I use social networks as one of my teaching/training tool.</li> <li>• I learn things about other topics of interest (e.g., video games, music, computer) in social networks.</li> <li>• Facebook is my students' preferred social network.</li> <li>• My students learn the materials they use in class through/in social networks.</li> <li>• I have a list of rules that regulates what to do and what not to do in social media and I check it regularly.</li> <li>• I tell my students that there are some things that cannot be done on social networks.</li> <li>• It is forbidden to use social networks in the school that I work in.</li> <li>• I do not allow my students to use social networks during lessons.</li> </ul> <p>✓ Invite participants to make up their own statements and act as an interviewer.</p>
<p>Tips for trainers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Try to elicit different opinions and encourage participants to support their arguments.</li> <li>✓ This activity promotes deep discussions as it allows diverse perspectives to appear.</li> </ul>

### Activity 3: Pros and Cons of different social media

Duration: 90 minutes

<p>Expected outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Know the basic concepts of social media.</li> <li>✓ Overcome obstacles in the use of social media at school and will learn to benefit from social media in the classroom.</li> <li>✓ Understanding of the roles and functions of social and political actors (K_COOP_1)</li> <li>✓ Willingness to act and encourage others to act against discrimination, prejudices, stereotypes and injustices (A_HR_4)</li> <li>✓ Ability to act against discrimination, stereotypes, injustices (S_HR_3)</li> <li>✓ Understanding of how cooperation can support the prevention conflict and discrimination and violence (K_COOP_3)</li> <li>✓ Knowledge about the different forms of discrimination and violence (K_HR_3)</li> <li>✓ Ability to learn in a variety of ways from participation in groups (S_COOP_1)</li> </ul>

<p>Methods/ techniques used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individual work</li> <li>✓ Group work</li> <li>✓ Plenary discussion</li> </ul>						
<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Post-it papers</li> <li>✓ Flip chart papers</li> <li>✓ Markers</li> <li>✓ Stickers, possibly dots in 3 different colours (green, yellow and red), each colour equal to the number of participants.</li> <li>✓ Candies or cards in different colours</li> </ul>						
<p>Practical arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Five tables with chairs for four participants at each for group work.</li> </ul>						
<p>Procedure</p> <p>Step 1 (5 min): <b>Individual work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Distribute post-it notes.</li> <li>✓ Ask participants to write down the social media networks that they use, one network per post-it (i.e. Facebook and WordPress).</li> </ul> <p>Step 2 (25 min): <b>Group work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask participants to find the same groups they worked with in the first activity when they were creating posters.</li> <li>✓ Distribute flipchart papers and markers to the groups.</li> <li>✓ Ask the groups to share their post-it notes and make clusters of the same social networks.</li> <li>✓ Ask the groups to create a T-poster following the model below for each social network that they use. They will have to analyse the pros and cons of each:</li> </ul> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Name of the social media:</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Pros</th> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Cons</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="height: 50px;"></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask the groups to hang the posters on the wall so that the same social networks are next to each other.</li> </ul> <p>Step 3 (10 min): <b>Individual work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Distribute 3 stickers (one green dot, one yellow and one red) per participant and invite them to look at the posters and evaluate the pros and cons of each social network and give their votes to the social networks that they like to use in their own educational settings. The green dot will represent the social network that they would pick as a first choice, the yellow as their second and finally, the red as their third choice.</li> </ul>	Name of the social media:		Pros	Cons		
Name of the social media:						
Pros	Cons					

**Step 4 (30 min): Tools for action**

- ✓ Pick the 5 social networks that got the most green votes during the previous group work.
- ✓ Distribute 5 different colours of candies or cards between the participants for grouping.
- ✓ Ask participants to find their micro-group by joining the people who have the same colour.
- ✓ Distribute the picked social media posters between the participants. Group 1 gets for example Facebook, group 2 gets WordPress, etc.
- ✓ Ask the micro-groups to create another poster with ideas on how this given tool can be used in their educational settings. Tell them to integrate terms like democratic participation, human rights and measures to help protect teachers and learners from risks and other negative aspects of these social media sites based on the previous analysis (for example hate speech, cyber bullying and so on).

**Step 5 (20 min): Plenary discussion and debriefing**

- ✓ Ask participants to form a circle and invite each group to introduce their ideas.
- ✓ Debrief with the group with the help of the questions below:
  - Describe your own experiences of using social media in schools.
  - What were the key concepts in the previous analysis?
  - What are the implications of social media for schools?
  - What do your students think about the key concepts of social networks?
  - Are their thoughts in line with your ideas?
  - Are you ready to start to use social media in your work with students? Or will you use social media differently from now on?
  - Do you have an idea of the levels of internet/social media used by your students?
  - Have you ever paid attention to your own consumption levels of internet/social media?
  - What can be the outcomes of online work developed with students?
  - How can we overcome resistance to using social media in schools?

### Activity 3: Evaluation

Duration: 30 minutes

**Expected outcome**

- ✓ Get overview of the learning process for further development.

**Methods/ techniques used**

- ✓ Plenary discussion
- ✓ Online evaluation

**Resources**

- ✓ Paper strips in 2 colours (green and red) equal to the number of participants.
- ✓ Online survey: Create a survey on Survey Monkey about the training and send the link to the participants.

**Practical arrangements**

- ✓ Flexible settings with open space. Chairs arranged in a circle.

Procedure

Step 1 (20 minutes): **Individual work**

- ✓ Ask participants to form a circle and take a seat.
- ✓ Tell participants that you will send them a Survey Monkey questionnaire to evaluate the training session.
- ✓ Distribute the green and red slips of paper.
- ✓ Ask participants to write on the green paper the positive aspects of the training regarding their own learning of content and methodology and on the red paper slips suggestions for improvement.
- ✓ Collect the green and the red feedback sheets.

Step 2 (10 minutes). **Debriefing**

- ✓ Debrief about following:
  - What would you identify as the most important aspect in this training?
  - What would you have done differently?
  - Are you going to use social media actively in your everyday work? In what way?
  - Are you interested in sharing your own experiences with other teachers?
  - Do you think they will be interested in these topics? Why?