An analysis of social network categories: social learning and social friendship

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Abstract

The growth of social networking becomes a main communication between all people. The huge number of social networks exist nowadays made people get confused the use and needs of particular website. The actual number of categories social networks is unknown as it is constantly evolving and indirectly effect to the learning system. The aim of this paper is to describe social networking categories and identify websites which involve both making friends and engage in learning. The main interest of this study is to find the equilibrium between social and education network to be integrated together as one platform. Pedagogies principles are used to map the relationship with social network features. Examples are content developer, content packaging and also supporting student. The outgrowths of this study will inform potential features of social e-learning which capable the formation of learning environment based on pedagogy principles, students interest and needs as well as support learning process.

Keywords: Social network, e-learning, social learning, pedagogies engagement;

1. Introduction

In globalization era, social networking has become the main communication method between most people in every place and nook in this world (Capo-Vicedo, et. al., 2010; Watanabe, et. al., 2009). In 2008, Porters said that the benefits itself make it was irresistible and convenient to use social networking. There are many reasons why people choose social network to get connected. According to Brown (2011), through social networking, people are getting their friends and families updates almost in second and it allow them to get connected to thousands of people and at same time allows them to mingle around with new friends, share real-life friendship and wonderful experiences through similar interest. Other than that, some might use social network to find a job, join groups, fan page, and express their opinion, forum and established business network (Porter, 2008; Vassile, 2008). Currently, many discussion and debated about social network is unclear through the usages and purposes.

From social network, it grows to new extend; merge together with education; e-learning and create new phenomena in education environment so called social learning; where the main focus is to share and widespread knowledge (Chan, 2002). Not like the conventional way. The application of this system will pull off the limit for us to share the information. The people who we get connected can be our friends, and this is we called social friendship. In this platform, people tend to use its network to find friends and creating a relationship.

Brown (2011) noted that social networking has many categories available in World Wide Web. Each category has their function and focus. This paper will focus on friendship category and learning category. In order to increase the knowledge sharing capabilities among people, one site is created to enable knowledge sharing. Nowadays, many high institutions had use e-learning platform to achieve this target. But this e-learning had focus on close environment, which are traditional methods of face-to-face teaching (Daniel, 2011). Naidu (2006) stressed on teaching and learning process by using network and technology known as e-learning. With closed learning environment may limit the sharing of open communication. Learning open via online, learning from scattered places synchronically, and learning through network and web based can be defines as e-learning. At these level, e-learning

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use technology Web 2.0. Fan, et. al (2008) emphasized that the Web 2.0 environment supply supports and benefit for the community such as good surrounding on learning, support interactive method while learning, setting same learning goals and tasks, make a strong identity and variety of evaluation method on learning. The used of social media to deliver the education, learning and knowledge is still questionable.

This paper is arranged as follows. Section 2 explicates some related works on Social Network (SN) on several definitions by previous study. Section 3 presents social network categories which include social friendship and social learning, while section 4 had some conclusion and discussion about this topic and some opinion may produces for future research.

2. An overview of Social Network

Social networking is an environment generated by user and user friendly. It is a medium that encourages some cooperation and also collaboration which are used in real learning environment like classroom, boardroom and an online discussion room. Social networking is a grouping of individuals into specific group (Brown, 2011) with specific interest. In order to make the connection become easy, network is needed to achieve this goal. Network have been use for personal changing, solving problems, receiving feedback, getting expertise, learning process and also can be use to change the world view (Dulworth, 2008).

Social networking is chosen because the application itself is the fastest growing properties on the web. Porters (2008) stress with support of social features enables them to sharing easily. Its purpose is to connect people, and when that is due efficiently, it grows very quickly as a result. Social networking also offer some services that might allow people to introduce themselves individuals to virtual manner, expand their network, and establish or maintain the network relations with others (Vassile, 2008). The usages become wide and benefited to the user. While some authors explored that there are many social networking established cater with particular needs (Ellison et al. 2007). Current trend in education environment uses social network as medium to convey knowledge. In education surrounding, social network can be use to stimulate the benefits on social and civic and also give an implication towards education (Greenhow, 2011). Most of universities and high institution create social network software for learning called as Moodle.

Based on Bandura (2007) "social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitude, and emotional reactions of others. Its learning processes focus on observing and modeling". Moreover social learning evolves from behavior and attitude wise into cognitive learning. Cognitive learning is the process of learning, absorbing knowledge through method of thinking, getting known, remembering, judging, and also problem-solving. The elements in social learning now want to absorb in online behavior so that this social learning can be born as social e-learning. This approach can be achieved if there are technologies used to perform. Vassile (2008) has listed three main roles as below:
1. The technologies will assist learners find the exact content covers the content itself, the audience, the objective of students and pedagogies.
2. The technologies will corroborate learners with the exact people includes the context, learners, objectives and educational goal
3. The technologies also will motivate and incentivize people to learn.

Technologies will help a lot in achieving learning in online behavior. The needs of interaction and communication can be achieve with the existing of social network. While for education it will assist learners to acquire and receive the information and knowledge from anywhere, anytime and not limited as well as improve skill of searching information.

3. Social Network Categories

The researcher have discussed in detail about social network that are used widely as interaction medium for various purposes. The benefits of social network to get sharing ideas, knowledge as well as communication each other. Social network category is a class given in social network which in large groups based on certain features,

function, form or meaning. In social network, there are many websites that can be categorized into some purposes. As example, Linkedl, Mahara and Ning. Figure 1 shows the diagram of social network categories which focus on the youth, location, travel, blogging, friendship, education, business, music, video, photo and many more (Larsen, 2008).
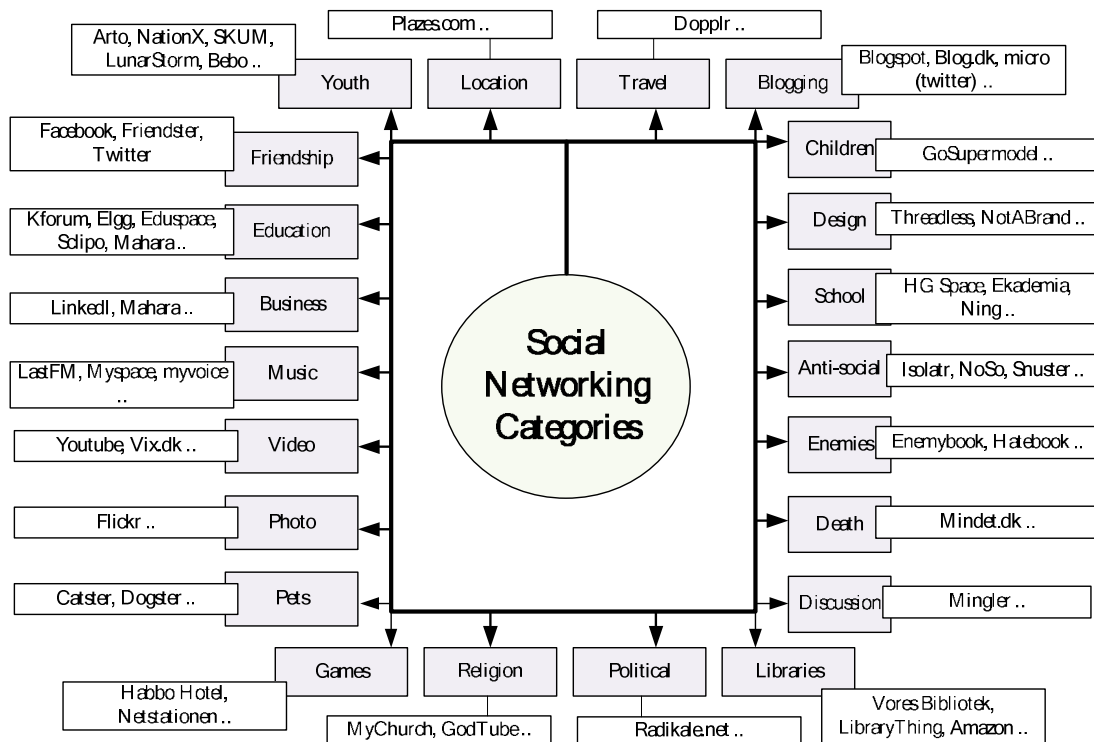

Figure 1: Social network categories (Larsen, 2008).

As we can see in the Figure 1, there are 22 categories available in social network such as discussion, libraries and political. Some of the websites have shared their categories such as Myspace. Myspace can also be categorized in friendship and music category. In social networking many websites fall into more than one category. The website shared the categories because they have some attributes and tools that can be use to fulfill their needs. The categories itself based on the activities on the websites. For example, if the websites do some activities on buying books, lending books and review books, the website fall into libraries categories. While for friendship, there are more than eight social networks available for friendship purposes. For instance Facebook, Freindster and also Twitter. From the discussion, a website can be categorized as friendship when the website activities involve finding friends, instant messaging, sharing photos, playing games, and create event. Based on TopTenReviews (2011), there are 10 websites fall under this category and the websites are rapidly increase time by time. Most of the social network users' is the teenagers. Othman et. al. (2011) found that more than 50% of users on Friendster are of the age between 25-34 year old. However users with the age between 18-24 are highest on Facebook. Most users from this range of age are students whom are from secondary school to higher education.

Since most of the students used social network, researchers believe that it can become an important platform to encourage student learning. As reported by Couillard (2009) which Facebook (social friendship) has a very huge potential to became a learning platform in academic purpose. As well as Facebook has some features which encourage to get social and learn at the same time. While for education or learning, any website that equips with knowledge sharing attitude is put in learning categories. In addition, the websites also must equip with Learning

Management System (LMS) that enable teaching and learning process to occur. According to Govindasamy (2001), LMS is a software which moves towards the full automation implementation of e-learning. Better still, pedagogical principles must be included in LMS. In addition based on Sulaiman (2002) pedagogy principles is a vital in applying various methods and techniques where by appropriate to the student either in conventional or current method. Current e-learning system have implemented some pedagogy fundamental in classroom environment but need to be improved and expanded to cater with rapid change of technology. So, with the growth of World Wide Web, and technologies 2.0, social network for enrich learning can be realized.
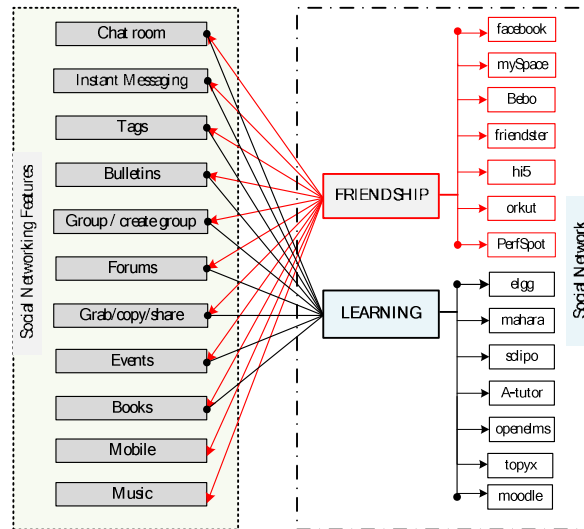

Figure 2: Relationship among social network features for friendship and learning.

Figure 2 presents social network categories for friendship and learning that currently available today. The popular social friendships available are Facebook, Myspace, Bebo and many more. While the social learning are Elgg, Mahara, Sclipo, and so on. Moodle is found to be highly used of LMS in education center in Malaysia (Embi and Adun, 2010). There are more than 10 local universities in Malaysia use Moodle as their e-learning platform such as Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Malaya (UM). All social networking features are embedded with all websites for friendship, but then only two features is not included in learning which are music and mobile. Social learning develops features such as mobile and music to encourage teenagers' fully utilized learning platform. The user will feel enjoyment while using social learning and support them to acquire knowledge. Better still the usage of mobile to enable users' access knowledge everywhere and anytime.

Pedagogy is a method to teach students or children. Most people call pedagogy as a teacher who teaches the students. Time moving and pedagogy evolve as a principle or fundamental of teaching method. A good teacher uses a variety of skills and the ability to create a conducive learning environment so students feel comfortable and successful in their studies (Sulaiman, 2004). This is very important to implement because it will assist a student understand the learning content. Most of formal learning use pedagogies principle to enrich learning. Furthermore, to empower e-learning system, pedagogies principle must be apply and use. As researcher discussed before, social friendship can become a good platform to enable teaching and learning and fortunately it's embedded with social network features.

Table 1: Relationship among pedagogies principle and social network features.

SN Features	Content Developer	Store and managing content	Content packaging	Supporting students	Formative assessment	Summative assessment
Chat room	×	×	√	√	√	√
Instant messaging	×	×	√	√	√	√
Tags	×	√	×	√	×	×
Bulletins	√	√	√	×	×	×
Group	×	√	×	×	√	√
Forums	×	√	√	×	×	√
Grab/copy/share	√	√	×	×	×	×
Mobile	×	√	√	√	√	√
Music	×	×	×	√	×	×
Events	×	×	×	×	×	×
Books	√	√	√	√	×	×

Table 1 illustrated the relationship among pedagogies principles and social network features. The most features of social network where support pedagogies principles are chat room, instant messaging, mobile and books. While music and event features are not support pedagogies principles. However three of six pedagogies principles can use social network features in supporting learning process. Such as store and managing content, content packaging and supporting students. Even though assessment principle is important to evaluate student, not many social networking features can support. By analyzing table 1 can be concluded that not all social network features are align with pedagogy principles. Although social network features are supported in social learning, but then the function may different as supporting pedagogy principles.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Social network has a widest network available in virtual world. Each of the networks has their own categories and needs. For education, e-learning has more such of evolvement and improvement which support learning process nowadays. One of them is social learning which open the opportunity of learning in easy ways. With the exposure, there will have more ways on how to encourage people learning. In order to support the process of teaching and learning, pedagogies are needed to help and guide them as well as provide better practice on teaching. So the exposures of social friendship is highly support this learning process. It is found that both the social friendship and learning are potential social network categories that highly support the learning process and controlling knowledge. Unfortunately, pedagogy principles are taking lightly towards the construction of social e-learning. But still a few of research being done to merge learning and friendship manner in online learning and also the best way to support them in controlling the knowledge based on pedagogy principles.

Acknowledgements

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