Perceptions of school children of using social media for learning

# Details

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384 secondary school pupils in the UK (aged 11-17)

# Abstract

Social media is lauded as a powerful tool for informal learning, and a tool of choice for teenagers. This paper reports on the findings of a survey of 384 secondary school pupils in the UK (aged 11-17) over a 12 week period. Our findings indicate a pervasiveness of social media usage amongst this age group, but variety in the types of engagement and self-reported importance of social media. Usage of social media for learning is dominated by logistical task support (for example, clarifying instructions) and heavily focused around homework activities. However, it appears that this provides a context for deeper engagement and learning around those homework activities. Our findings indicate that social media is being used by this age group to support their learning, but that there is still great untapped potential both in terms of the range of activities discussed, and the number of pupils engaging. © 2017, Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education. All rights reserved.

# Outcome

"In our work we have tried to examine how school-aged
children engage with social media, perceive its value for learning, and use it for learning. Over a 12
week period 384 pupils (aged 11-17) at six UK secondary schools took part in our online survey
investigating their perceptions and use of social media in everyday life and for learning.... Though school aged children report using social media extensively there is a significant minority
(20%) who do not view it as important in their everyday lives. Different social media tools are regarded
as having specific uses with only a handful of tools being used by a large number of pupils, and there
appears to be very little difference of use irrespective of gender or age. There are gender differences in
perceived importance, but these perceptions do not seem to effect actual engagement.... Findings show that low level uses (chatting to friends or relatives) were seen as the most important
aspects over more complex uses (such as arranging events or sharing content). In support of learning
social media is primarily used for logistical reasons (e.g. managing homework tasks), there is a strong
secondary activity around engaging with the content itself, but this is primarily based around
homework activity, rather than other school activities such as lessons. This may be because the use of
social media for homework logistics provides a social expectation and framework around homework,
which is missing for other school work...There is some evidence that self-reported behaviour is not reliable, for example over 40% of
students who reported that they did not receive support via social media, still reported examples of this
occurring. There also appears to be a reporting bias, in that students reveal more examples of them
helping others, than others helping them, and this shows how important it is to ask these kinds of
questions from both sides." (Blair et al., 2017: 12-13).