

QUDWA 2017

Teacher Talk in collaboration with OECD

“Social Media As a Platform for Tomorrow's Learning”

Sunday, October 8th, 2017, 2-2.45pm

- **Derek Swanson**, High School STEM/ICT Educator, American Community School of Abu Dhabi, UAE
- **Koen Timmers**, Teacher, PXL Hasselt (University College), Belgium
- **Dr. Najla Al Naqbi**, Educational Technology Expert Innovation and eLearning Manager, Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), UAE

Moderated/Facilitated by

- **Alejandro Paniagua**, Consultant, Innovation and Measuring Progress, Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD

Summary/Key Points

As the internet becomes more important in students' daily lives, social media platforms help shape more sophisticated online behaviours, giving rise to both new learning styles and challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and loss of privacy. In what ways can teachers take advantage of the popularity of social media to foster students' agency over their own learning?

While parents and educators can complain about how obsessed their children and students are with social media, the technology is here to stay. And the truth is, teachers have a big role to play in teaching students how to use social media responsibly and compassionately. “Whether we want to use social media to improve our teaching or not, social media is out there,” said Paniagua. “The other powerful reason is that social media is transforming the way students learn.”

Good teachers, as best they can, are not scared off by the possible negatives of social media and instead learn from their students, colleagues and community about how best to apply it for learning in the classroom.

Being able to connect to and access experts and members of the community via platforms such as Facebook or LinkedIn, or using Skype to visit world-class museums, are all valuable tools. “It’s the teacher’s role to point them in the right direction, instead of pouring knowledge into their hands,” said Timmers.

Fear has no place in a learning environment, so the best way is to embrace social media while being mindful of the downfalls. “Each one of you is a gardener and if teachers want to put up a wall up around their garden, it’s just a fear that when you open yourself up to the world you only hear about the downside and people are going to be trodding through your garden,” said Swanson. “The real beauty of a garden doesn’t come when it’s walled.”

Social media replaces completely the need for a weekly letter home from the teacher, and it is a good thing, because social media connects schools to their community. “A lot of schools choose not to engage in social media and if you choose not to engage with social media, then that community is built without a school,” said Swanson.

There is no sense ignoring something that is such a vital part of each student’s life, said Al Naqbi.

“We have to teach them how to use it effectively, how to use it correctly,” she said. “So really we need to bring it to our school, so when they come to school they do not feel as if they are disconnected.”

While some believe that children are sharing too much, a look to the future suggests there may soon be no such thing as privacy. When teachers familiarise themselves with the platforms children are using, then they can better help them navigate through it. “You will receive some bad comments you will receive some complements,” said Al Naqbi. “Then when you are equipped, your students will learn from you.”

Main Takeaway: If students and teachers are not engaging in social media, then they are not connecting with their community.

