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Design of a Strategy for the Use of Social Media as an Educational Tool in Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on a research project on social media as an educational tool. At present, social media has been integrated into students' daily lives, becoming a distraction in the classroom. The main objective is to design a strategy for the use of social media as an educational tool in secondary school. Qualitative research was carried out phenomenologically; the instruments used were observations and interviews applied to 21 teachers and 153 teachers from three different schools. Two categories were used: social media and educational tools. The data were analyzed by triangulation of each category and subcategory. The results revealed challenges the educational field faces with the use of social media; some teachers consider these as distractors in the classroom, and there is no relation to educational tools; however, for most students, social media are useful in their educational environment, and they have been used as pedagogical support. Social media greatly impacts academic achievement and could motivate teamwork, search educational materials, experience learning, and promote motivation.

Keywords: social media, educational tool, strategy

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Diseño de una Estrategia para el Uso de las Redes Sociales como Herramienta Educativa en la Educación Secundaria

RESUMEN

Este artículo se fundamenta en un proyecto de investigación sobre las redes sociales como herramienta educativa. Actualmente, las redes sociales se han integrado en la cotidianidad de los estudiantes, convirtiéndose en un distractor en el aula. El objetivo principal es diseñar una estrategia para el uso de las redes sociales como herramienta educativa en secundaria. Se realizo una investigación cualitativa, fenomenológica, los instrumentos utilizados son observaciones y entrevistas aplicadas a 21 docentes y 153 estudiantes en 3 instituciones educativas. Se emplearon 2 categorías: las redes sociales y herramienta educativa. Los datos se analizaron por medio de una triangulación de cada categoría y subcategoría. Los resultados revelan varios desafíos en el sector educativo frente al uso de las redes sociales, varios de los docentes consideran que son un distractor en el aula y que no hay una relación como herramienta educativa sin embargo para la mayoría de los estudiantes las redes sociales son útiles en su entorno educativo y las han utilizado como apoyo pedagógico. Las redes sociales tienen un gran impacto en el rendimiento académico y pueden ser utilizadas para incentivar el trabajo en equipo, buscar material educativo, tener un aprendizaje experiencial y fomentar la motivación.

Palabras clave: redes sociales, herramienta educativa, estrategia

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INTRODUCTION

Social media and their influence on our lives are unquestionable, they have permeated the framework of education by exploring new technologies, that enrich the academic training processes. As Gomez, Roses, and Farias (2012) say social media promote the publication of information, self-learning, teamwork, communication, feedback, access to other networks, and contact with other experts, among other elements.

Currently, social media as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X among others have become platforms that influence the everyday life of students of all ages in different ways, where the first years of life are established the initial approaches to technological devices become in a necessity through the time and creating a familiarization with them.

According to a study carried out by Marketing Digital Smart Insights agency, social media has increased rapidly in the last years, and their use is even greater after the pandemic, a situation that forced us to have a big connection with the world virtually. Afterward, most people continue using social media in their everyday lives, so much so that they have become the favorite tool for people to promote their undertakings, projects, ideas, travels, social life, sports, and educative.

The social media influence is not always positive as Alvarez (2017) describes, over the time the students have built new forms of written expressions affecting their teaching-learning process, in other words, students create changes when expressing themselves in a writing way either by popularity, laziness or rapidity, these changes are reflected in the educational field, deteriorating the language, where they do not use grammar and spelling rules.

On the other hand, regarding the use of social media in secondary school, students have no control over using them, Echeburua and Corral (2010) mentioned that younger people are incapable of controlling their use, which affects their academic performance and their relationships, social media can also create a false identity causing the student to distort reality and involving their family, social life, their health, and their educational environment. This relationship between school and social media has generated major conflicts as it is a factor of constant distraction in students and potentiates individualist behaviors.



Faced with this, it is important to remember that social media were initially created not for educational but communicative purposes so that people relate primarily to each other. (Fueyo, Braga, y Fano, 2015). Therefore, the constant use that teenagers give it generates distractions in their teaching-learning process due to the lack of guidance in its proper use including the lack of judgment about the truthfulness of information or the online risks from all areas; it is important to generate a change of perspective where social media are no seen as an obstacle or a challenge but a beneficial means to generate a teaching-learning process, incorporating social media safely and remarkably for students. Moreover, the educational potential of social media is hardly ever being fully exploited in the school environment to enrich academic activities. There are often seen as a problem that needs to be eradicated, such as banning the use of mobile phones.

Hence, it is important to address this issue to ensure that students develop digital skills, learn to distinguish information, and use social media positively and constructively in their educational process. Based on the problem, this study is carried out for the design of a strategy for the use of social media as an educational tool in secondary school, through a qualitative analysis of the relationship between social media as an education tool aimed at secondary school in three urban institutions from Bogota and Cundinamarca with a diverse population and teachers from different areas within the country. The aim is to analyze the relationship between social media as educational tools in secondary and design a strategy that allows effective and favorable use of these platforms in the educational field.

METHODOLOGY

This study was based on a qualitative approach as a method that allowed us to explore and describe different situations related to the use of social media in middle and high school students, so that we could generate a strategy for implementing these social media for educational purposes. According to Hernández-Sampieri (2018) the qualitative approach is based on inductive processes starting from the most specific to the general, taking into account the perspectives, opinions, experiences, emotions, and other significant aspects of the participants. Thus, thanks to this approach it was possible to explore the interaction between the study population by means of verbal and non-verbal data, in this way, as researchers we focused on the experiences of the participants taking into account how they are



experienced (Hernández-Sampieri, 2018), it is for this reason that, Hernández-Sampieri (2018), establishes that the qualitative data are "concepts, perceptions, mental images, beliefs, emotions, interactions, thoughts, practices, experiences, experiences and roles manifested in the language of participants, either individually or collectively" (p. 443). In addition, the qualitative method allowed us to engage directly with the study population (Hernández-Sampieri, 2018), which means that as teachers-researchers we could understand and interpret the realities of students and teachers around the use of social networks, leading this use for educational purposes.

In this order, as the qualitative approach was established for this research, it is important to mention that it had a descriptive scope because by means of this type of study it is intended to "specify properties and characteristics of concepts, phenomena, variables or facts in a given context" (Hernández-Sampieri, 2018, p. 108). Therefore, the descriptive scope of this research allowed us to specify what is the relationship of social networks as an educational tool in secondary school, identifying the characteristics of the teaching and pupil population, as well as the processes of teaching-learning and their relationship with the use of social media.

Besides, the design of this research was phenomenological as it allowed us to perceive realities as a dynamic between features and performers that take part in an ordered, cooperating, and general total, demanding the use of a qualitative-structural methodology according to Martínez (1994) cited by Fuster (2019). That is why, through this phenomenological design it was possible for us to understand in different ways the same experience and be able to interpret the realities of the participants according to their experiences observed and/or shared through the interviews (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández and Baptista, 2006). Taking into account what is indicated by Hernández-Sampieri (2018), we determined three phases for this methodological design, which were identification of the phenomenon to be investigated through observations, perceptions, and diagnosis of lived experiences through the interviews to students of middle and high school and teachers; as second phase, the design of the strategy for the use of social networks as an educational tool in secondary school; and as a third phase, the formulation as a conclusion to the design of the built strategy.

Population

In this way, the population was integrated by students and teachers. Regarding to the students, all of them are from three public institutions, two schools located in Bogotá, and the other one in Soacha. The Bogotá's students were in seventh, eighth, ninth and eleventh grades, and the students of the institution in Soacha were in tenth grade.

Therefore, they are all in an age range between 12 and 17 years old and they were selected as the study population taking into account that they are active users of different social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook mainly, in addition they are students of two of the teacher-researchers of this project, who teach English as a foreign language in these public institutions. Regarding to the teachers, that take part of the study population, were from different cities of Colombia with an age range between 20 and 50 years old who teach different subjects such as Maths, Spanish language, Arts, English, Physical Education, Chemistry and Social Sciences, and who are also active users of different social networks that have or have not used social networks in their educational practices.

Data collection instrument

The tools for data collection were observation and interviews. The classroom observations were useful to identify the use of social media in the classroom, not essentially for academic purposes, and an interview to students, and another to teachers to comprehend the perspectives of the students and teachers about the social networks for educational practices.

With respect to the students and teachers' interviews, we designed the questions, and each one was subject to expert judgment, so we restructured them, according to the experts' suggestions, before conducting the interviews. To collect the data completely, we allowed students and teachers to answer the interviews by means of an online form that was sent to the computer labs of the institutions.

Variables/Categories

The categories and sub-categories were taken from the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and background, also corresponding to each specific objective and each data collection instrument designed and applied for this research.



The first category was social media, and its subcategories were Facebook, Instagram, and Tik Tok; the second category was educational tool with its subcategories educational technological resources, educational practices, and pedagogical strategies; and the third category was educational processes, and its subcategories were teaching processes, learning processes and motivation.

Furthermore, the methodology of this research project was divided in three phases:

Identification phase, where classroom observations were conducted to identify the existing relationship of social networks in middle and high school students and teachers, these observations were recorded in observation record formats where only the facts concerning to the use of social networks in the classroom were detailed, without the premise that they were used only for educational purposes, plus the data collected through the interviews to students and teachers.

Design phase, where after data collection, we proceeded with the triangulation of qualitative analysis in order to design the strategy for the use of social networks as an educational tool in secondary school. This design takes into account the categories and subcategories established; thus, it is based on the theoretical references and the data collected.

And formulation phase, where after designing a strategy for the use of social networks (Facebook, Instagram and TikTok) as educational tools in secondary school, specifically in the seventh, eighth, tenth and eleventh grades, a conclusion is drawn on the strategy designed, to proceed to give recommendations to future researchers on the use of social networks in education.

The methodological process of data analysis was carried out in a qualitative manner, where we performed the triangulation of each category and corresponding subcategory. The technique used was the identification and grouping of common answers from the participants, and the procedure used was a systematic table where these responses were classified and related to what was obtained in the observations and the theoretical references having as main axis the objectives, the general and the specific ones.

RESULTS

Through this research project, about the use of social networks as an educational tool by means of a designed strategy, different findings were identified at different times during the implementation of the data collection instruments, during the analysis of these data, and at the time of the design of the strategy.

Based on triangulation of data collected from interviews and class observations with the theory, it was found that both students and teachers use Facebook to communicate, clarify doubts and share educational resources, highlighting their ability for interaction. Students value the platform for facilitating communication and teamwork, while teachers use it to share methodologies and teaching materials. It was also found that Facebook is a source of educational content, helping students to strengthen knowledge, and teachers to get ideas for their classes confirming their usefulness in the educational field according to Jiménez and Alonso (2020) and Molina et al. (2020).

As for Tik Tok, observations indicated that TikTok could be more attractive to students than traditional classes due to lack of interest or distraction. However, through the interviews it was found that TikTok is also a useful educational tool, fostering interaction and experiential learning, as proposed by Tobeña (2020).

Both teachers and students see TikTok as a valuable resource for professional development and learning, with examples of teachers implementing platform methodologies and students using it to better understand topics. Motivation is crucial to learning, and while TikTok can be an effective tool, its success may depend on how it integrates with teaching interaction.

On the social network Instagram, students show a predominant use of this platform for non-academic activities, such as looking at clothes, makeup and socializing. However, they also use it to communicate, follow accounts and, sometimes, search for educational content, such as application recommendations or reels on mathematics. Some even follow teachers in search of methods of study and motivation. Teachers also recognize the educational potential of Instagram, using the platform to obtain teaching methodologies and share experiences with other professional communities.



According to observations, social networks in educational practices show a common pattern in their use as distraction during school activities carried out by students. As for the interviews conducted with teachers and students, they use social networks as educational practices, to make the classes more friendly, so they provide relevant information, implementing interactive activities involving students to participate actively, for example, some teachers said that we must be up to date, being in line with the interests of students in this technological age in which they are living and find new strategies, as well, some others states that working with tools, that are in the context of the students, and are the ones that they manage with great ease is a great advantage; so it is attractive to the students and would facilitate the learning processes. Conferring to Tonato and Valencia (2021) quoted by González (2023) mentions that "social media in education is a broad and complex topic. On the one hand, networks can be a useful tool for education, as they enable communication and collaboration between students and teachers, access to information and educational resources, and the creation of learning communities.

Several studies have shown that moderate use of these platforms can increase student engagement, promote collaboration, and develop the digital skills needed in the twenty-first century" (p. 585).

It is evident from the responses to the interviews that both students and teachers use social networks as pedagogical strategies in their classes. Most students say that teachers use networks to consolidate knowledge in the topics seen in the classroom, to make them more dynamic and to leave activities through them. They also indicate that the most widely used strategy by teachers is videos as students says that teachers use YouTube to teach us videos related to the topics seen in class.

According to this analysis of the responses given by teachers regarding the opinion about the use of social networks as an educational tool in pedagogical practices, some teachers state that social media is a tool that provides many opportunities to spread what is learned at school, in addition, it attracts the attention of students which allows to reverse its use, It is evidenced that there is a positive perspective of both students and teachers towards the use of social networks as pedagogical strategies inside and outside the classroom by highlighting the opportunities that these have in the teaching-learning process of the students and at the same time highlighting that teachers use the networks to strengthen the knowledge taught in class.





Social networks in teaching processes are beneficial in terms of innovation and practicality for teachers by giving their classes in an appealing way for secondary school students, for example, teachers consider that the good use of social media promotes a distinct and attractive way to teach different topics within the classroom with clear purposes and specific objectives. By having clear goals and limits in the use of social media for the benefit of teaching processes, students also recognize that social media is very useful as some think that social networks encourage teamwork and provide tools to make classes more interesting or fun where students can learn in different ways.

Also, when we asked teachers about the influence of social networks on the academic performance of students, they answered that social media has a great influence in the adolescent population today, so that young people are increasingly attracted to all the audiovisual, and they are facilitated the use of these platforms in the everyday life within and outside their school days, however, if the use of social media is well oriented.

It can strengthen their educational processes generating positive impacts on school performance and facilitating the teaching processes of each teacher. In relation to this, Jaimes-Barrera (2021) states that "The use of social networks allows teachers to teach students to acquire abilities to be self-sufficient, in order to learn about the accelerated process of change and transformation to which we are subjected by new technologies" (p. 23). That is why, social networks offer an endless resource to facilitate the teaching processes through videos, forums, messaging, blogs and image design or short videos.

Additionally, when we talk about educational processes Ibarra (2009) mentions that it depends on various factors not only of the individual but of his/her skills and context, needs and educational levels must be taken into account.

When using social networks and talking about learning processes, we can see several points of view but there is a common denominator which refers to promoting teamwork is so as it is evidenced that in the student interview the majority of respondents mention the benefits of using social media as a facilitator for their learning, several mention that it is a communication tool that allows and indirectly promotes teamwork. Also, comments such as the one of some students that think that the use of social media in the classroom promotes the value of sharing and collaboration, they can join in a social network and



make video calls as well, and from there they can do homework as a teamwork. This highlights the advantages of using the social network in their learning process.

For (Jaimes-Barrera et al., 2021) networks form an environment of multiculturalism, communication, autonomy and, at the same time, promote collaborative learning as it can be a favorable place to learn, where the role of the teacher would be modular and collaborate with the learning of its students. In addition, social networks create opportunities for students to discuss their ideas, work on group projects, receive criticism from their peers and teachers which generates a development of the ability to work in a team (González, 2023).

Besides, according to González (2023), social networks can help students learn better, work in team and feel more motivated in their process, this statement goes well together with the interviews and observations carried out, to see that students have a lot of interest in their phones according to the class observations recorded, where many students were happier and more motivated to do the job when they are allowed to use technological devices to develop a certain academic activity, on the other hand going to the students' interviews, some expressed that they follow accounts that tell them methods of study. Following this students' idea for Resta (2004), tools or technological resources not only help learning but also increase the motivation to study when students are immersed in using them; another benefit is that this motivation leads to self-learning as students mentioned things like using accounts that help them in learning and facilitates things that they do not understand. These statements make us think that the use of social networks and the motivation that it implies promotes autonomy.

For the teachers, several mentioned some more advantages of the use of social networks in pedagogical practices. Teachers think that aspects such as ease of use, innovation, improvement of educational quality, motivation for students to learn, and saving time and space are among the benefits when using social media. These answers are very much aimed at the motivating effects that has the use of social networks as well as Akcaoglu & Lee (2018).

Learning motivation has shown that students experience positive emotions and improve their social skills when they are immersed in a social network.



Strategy Designed

Since the previous analysis of the data collected based on a qualitative triangulation, the strategy is designed, but the following aspects that are specified on the following chart being considered in its implementation:

See chart 1. Preliminary considerations prior to the implementation of the strategy

Considering the aspects set out in the chart above, the strategy designed in three moments per specific social network is presented below, which can be used independently or in a complementary manner: *See chart 2. Strategy designed.*

DISCUSSION

First of all, from the implementation of application instruments, it is possible to evidence based on observations and interviews that students are spending more time on social media and this is a social concern at this moment, this result is consistent with the literature, for example, Mendoza and Ruben (2018) report that social media are in constantly being updated therefore increases the number of users and the overall time they use them, due to these constant changes arise the necessity to do researches in this area.

We can notice that their favorite social media after analyzing the results were: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, by considering two perspectives: students and teachers, we could observe and analyze their opinions about the use of social media in the educational field, in teachers it looks more defined considering that many of them claim social media are a potential distractor in the classroom nevertheless another group of teachers relate that they can be a motivating and a rewarding tool for students however the majority mention that there must be a guideline or a regulator to use this tools; as far as students' perception is more positively inclined to involve them more in their educational environment.

This concern on the part of teachers is closer to the results obtained by Ibañez and Sanchez (2018) teachers' perception about the use of social media is that they should have certain conditions because the characteristics that generate more rejection from teachers are lack of parental control, not much control in the conversations, lack of privacy and broadcasting images and videos, also our study is in



agreement with there are no resources needed in the schools, get to the conclusion that this negative perception is due greatly to the lack of training in this field as they mentioned in the interviews.

For that reason is important to analyze the benefits in the student's teaching and learning process with the use of social media taking into account the respective cautions about the misuse of the internet and the false information disseminated constantly, according to the research by Mendoza (2008) social media and academic performance are closely related, in his results mentioned a big percentage of students use social media to search academic information; so similar to our results where students mention using the social media as support of multimedia, for further details on some topic, search ideas about how to do a project besides, this generates a relationship of greater motivation in the students since they can feel more committed using a tool which it is familiar and it is attractive for them.

Considering the above, it is important to mention the relationship between social media and the education process is mainly communicative because during and after the pandemic, this resource enhanced as a principal media in the relationship to student-student, student-teacher, and even parent-teacher, the results obtained were similar to Torres and Carranza (2011) because they said social media allows the development of communicative skills of students, as well as improving the interaction between student and teacher also rewarding collaborative learning and being a methodological tool for teachers.

According to the teachers interviewed, many of them are already using pedagogical dynamics and practices from social media, they have read or seen content, so they post or use educational content found in their accounts or searching educational content from specific areas. That is how research by Marcelo, G., and Marcelo M (2021) analyzes the academic content in X before called Twitter as it worked supporting teachers during and after the pandemic, in this social network teachers share their questions about materials, tools, or resources that they can use in their class, creating an affinity space closely to the results of this article.

ILLUSTRATIONS, TABLES, FIGURES.

Chart 1. Preliminary considerations prior to the implementation of the strategy.

| Preliminary considerations before the implementation of the strategy | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Social Network | Approach | Targets | Evaluation criteria |
| Facebook | Conducting forums in private groups created by teachers. | To promote collaborative participation. To improve communication. To evaluate reading comprehension, coherence, cohesion, and spelling. | Active participation in the forums. Development of collaborative work. Appropriate written communication. |
| Instagram | Use of educational post and stories, with questions and surveys. | To increase interaction in class. To promote collaborative knowledge building. To encourage teamwork. | Active participation in surveys and questions. Appropriation of the topics. Collaborative work. |
| TikTok | Oral presentations on specific topics through short videos. | To encourage creativity. To develop critical thinking. To evaluate knowledge acquired through peer-assessment. | Creativity on each presentation. Peer-critical evaluation. Effective demonstration of learning. |
| Usage agreements: | | | |

- Teachers will establish a specific duration for each activity while students are using any social network.
- The teacher must ensure that the use of phones and social networks is exclusively for academic purposes.
- Students and teachers must promote the appropriate use of language in all interactions, always with respect.
- Students and teachers must know that all content shared should be for educational purposes, not using pictures
 of students or videos of their faces or bodies.
- Teachers must be aware of the responsibility of the use of social networks and the consequences that can be generated with improper use.

Advice:

- In case the institution does not have the technological resources such as computers and tablets, it is necessary to ensure that at least one group of students have mobile devices and thus work cooperatively between two or three students with a phone, especially for the use of social networks such as Instagram and TikTok, in addition to internet connection.
- Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok can also be used as sources of information.
- Previously, teachers should give an introduction lesson about the guidelines for the proper use of social networks and ethical considerations, such as privacy and security, cyber risk and prevention.
- Students can search a topic through videos published by influencers or experts who have profiles where they
 talk about some academic topics.
- An informed consent of parents is important to let them know that students are going to learn about netiquette,
 cyber risks, good use of social networks, security, and privacy.
- Students must use avatars and filters and do not show the identity of themselves, taking into account that all students are minors, and their faces must not be published in any activity.





Facebook Instagram TikTok

It can be used to create forums in private groups, which teachers should create either by course or subject. There, students would be users who, upon joining the group, would see a main publication created by the teacher using a guiding question, a text, and a question that generates debate and/or an image. In this way, students will have to respond in comments, to participate in this "forum" created on Facebook and replicate their classmates. Through this, students will be developing collaborative work and communication, and the teacher will be able to review aspects related to the activity proposed in the main publication, as well as reading comprehension, coherence, and spelling.

Instagram as an educational tool allows the publication of photographs with filters and/or avatars, as well as several applications in stories that last 24 hours, such as question boxes and surveys. Therefore, teachers can use this social network during their classroom classes, previously creating a user specifically for the use of their subject or course, there students must follow this profile from their accounts to see the publications and stories created by the teacher for educational purposes. The teacher will be publish able to stories with question/answer box, publishing an image related to a teaching topic, and above it the box with a question that students must answer from their individual accounts. Likewise, the teacher can create a survey, and students must participate in it following the teacher's publication.

This is recommended to be done in class, but not as a homework assignment in order to ensure that all students participate. In the same way, the activity could be oriented so that the students are the ones who create the questions and surveys, also in collaborative groups where teamwork, knowledge construction, and communication will be encouraged.

TikTok can be used as an audiovisual tool, where the teacher proposes teamwork for the oral presentation of a specific topic of their subject. In this way, students in groups will develop their creativity and demonstrate their learning through the video created and published on this Classmates network. other groups will be able to comment on each other's video carrying out a assessment, which the teacher will also take into account, thus developing critical thinking, creativity, and the teacher will able to evaluate knowledge acquired.

On the other hand, these three social networks can also be used as sources of information, for which the teacher can allow their specific use in class, in this way, students can investigate a topic through videos published by experts who have profiles where they talk about the academic topic.

It should be noted that, for the use of this designed strategy, it is necessary to ensure that students have mobile devices, especially for the use of social networks such as Instagram and TikTok, as well as internet connection.





CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the advantages that involve the use of social media as an educational tool for both students and teachers and how these are related to student's academic performance without leaving aside the possible risks and suggestions that emerged from this research, this generates a need to design an educational tool which helps and works as a guide for the implementation of social media in an education field. The research shows a negative perception by some teachers, they think social media distracts students, there is no good development of the class, and it is also difficult to involve them in the classroom showing us the lack of teacher training in this area.

In the secondary school context, many students mentioned using social media as an education tool in addition they think it should be useful to use them in class; even some students are aware that there must be standards or conditions to use them in the classroom, that is to say, this study stands out the relevance that social media has in the students' life and determines that there is a close relationship with their education performance. According to the perceptions already mentioned, great caution should be exercised for teachers and students to generate the most benefit in the classroom.

From conceptual foundations drawn from diverse authors, several concerns regarding the implementation of social media in the educational field have been cleared, as it has been shown that mainly helps in the development of communication skills, offering broad academic content that benefits the entire educational community, demonstrating that every social network has specifications that provide educational benefits; nevertheless its use must be appropriate and regulated since social media have generated dependence in students according to other authors. Finally, institutions should promote new implementations and be allies of new trends.

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