# The Place of Social Media in Community Development: Implications for Community-Based Education

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**Abstract:** The problem of rural-urban migration among many others has been traced largely to the development gap existing between rural communities and their urban counterparts in many countries. Much effort has been invested into ensuring a reduction in this gap, since, a complete closure may not be in sight anytime soon. For this reduction to be possible, people need to be connected in order to share relevant information necessary for keeping people in touch with latest trends and developments. Social media is one of the fastest ways of reaching a good number of people any time anywhere in the world of today. This study discusses the place of social media in community development in relation to community-based education. Community-based education is a way forward in pursuing community development as a goal. This form of education can be fostered via. social media platforms for maximum impact.

**Key words:** Community, community development, education, social media, technology, impact

## INTRODUCTION

**Social media:** Social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas and information and the building of virtual networks and communities. By design, social media is internet-based and offers users easy electronic communication of personal information and other contents such as videos and photos. Users engage with social media via. computer, tablet or smartphone via. web-based software or web application, often utilizing it for messaging (De Zuniga et al., 2012). According to Trainor et al. (2014), social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via. virtual communities and networks. The variety of stand-alone and built-in social media services currently available introduces challenges of definition, however, there are some common features:

- Social media are interactive Web 2.0 internet-based applications
- User-generated contents such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos and data generated through all online interactions is the lifeblood of social media
- Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app. that are designed and maintained by the social media organization
- Social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups

The following are global top 15 most popular social media platforms implicated in community development process according to DG (2018) (Table 1).

Table 1: The 15 most popular social media platforms implicated in community development

| Social media platform | Monthly active users |
|---|---|
| Facebook | 2,230,000,000 |
| YouTube | 1,900,000,000 |
| Instagram | 1,000,000,000 |
| Qzone | 563,000,000 |
| Weibo | 376,000,000 |
| Tweeter | 336,000,000 |
| Reddit | 330,000,000 |
| Pinterest | 200,000,000 |
| Ask.fm | 160,000,000 |
| Tumblr | 115,000,000 |
| Flicker | 112,000,000 |
| Google+ | 111,000,000 |
| LinkedIn | 106,000,000 |
| VK | 97,000,000 |
| Odnoklassniki | 71,000,000 |

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**Community development:** Community development, according to the NACDEP (2014) is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings. Community development is a process whereby those who are marginalized and excluded from society are enabled to gain self confidence and to join with others. They are encouraged to participate in actions to change their situation and to tackle the problems that face their community (Emeh *et al.*, 2012). Emeh *et al.* (2012) added that in community development practice, it is rudimentary that the solution to community problems is sought first, within the community and its resources and capabilities. Community development specialists usually work in teams and liaise closely with the police, social workers, teachers, probation officers and other agencies. They represent the voices and needs of target groups and disadvantaged communities to policy makers at local and national level (Phillips and Pittman, 2014). Community work is concerned with the development and empowerment of communities through facilitating the active participation of people in addressing issues that affect them collectively. It can be done in a variety of contexts like in neighborhoods with specific groups such as women and travelers with partnership groups such as local authorities and state agencies.

**Community-based education:** We define community based education as the broad set of teaching and learning strategies that enable children, youth and adults to learn what they want to learn from any segment of the community. Our definition provides for learners of all ages to identify what they wish to learn and opens up an unlimited set of resources to support them. By community, the schools, formal and informal institutions in one's neighborhood and the entire world are included through such resources like the internet (Owens and Wang, 1996).

Community-based education according to Anonymous (2018) is a high impact practice which can improve student retention and engagement and help students better absorb, retain and transfer knowledge. This tip sheet contains suggestions for working with an on-campus community partner to offer students an authentic learning experience. Examples of community based education programs includes:

- Tech prep
- School-to-work
- Service-learning
- Youth apprenticeship
- Cooperative education
- Experience based career education

According to Owens and Wang (1996), the outcomes of community-based education cover the full range of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be an effective citizen, worker and lifelong learner. Articles and research reports across the various categories of community-based education suggest five major outcome areas:

- Academic
- Career and vocational
- Service and work values
- Personal-social development
- Understanding and use of community resources

**Barriers to community-based education:** One major problem, here is the difficulty of effectively evaluating what is learned from student's experiences in community based education. From a practical perspective, community-based education requires commitment in terms of time, effort and expense from the top as well as from dedicated teachers. From an ideological perspective, many educators still maintain an older paradigm of education, in which its purpose is to impart to students the content knowledge possessed by the teacher. Another ideological barrier is the perception of many school and community people that the subject matter content they learned in school should serve as the driving force in what is taught today.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This review paper discusses the place of social media in community development in relation to community based education. The literature review methodology adopted by the researchers enabled them to gather related materials on this topic for analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The place of social media platforms:** Social networks are beginning to have a bigger role in building community and catalyzing neighborhood co-operation and social action. In many ways, social media platforms have been utilized by many individuals and organizations in achieving community development (Ansari *et al.*, 2012). One national organization that has used social

media to encourage community action is Keep Britain Tidy. This organization has used existing social networks such as Twitter and Facebook to help change people's habits nationally and organize local litter pickups. Keep Britain Tidy now has almost 9,000 followers on Twitter and 2,000 on Facebook who are actively involved in community development processes. The organization has encouraged its Twitter followers to take photos of litter in their areas and share them as a Twitpic. It has also launched a closed Ning forum where people can turn conversation and debates into action. It is obvious that social network platforms occupy an invaluable position in the struggle for community development. Your Square Mile, an organization that is building communities both on and offline in 16 UK locations has worked with some heavy users of Facebook in achieving community development goals as well as many others. But it is not just social media that can be used to mobilize communities, online blogs and forums can have a similar effect. Studies have shown that neighborhood sites appear to be playing a consolidating role in building a stronger attachment on already-set foundations. They help to raise and debate local issues transparently and provide a channel and encouragement for people to get involved in civic and community issues (Anonymous, 2019).

Community-based education, done in the spirit of community development may not enjoy much efficiency if distanced from social media in today's world. Internet and technology in general and social media in particular have changed learning processes by evolving not just where people learn but also how they learn. At the same time, social media have created conditions for the development of new paradigms and methodologies in education generally as in the case of community-based education (Putnik *et al.*, 2016). Beyond being a technological support, the new digital environment provided by social media platforms is an alternative to the traditional classroom obtainable in most communities. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative and flexible learning as well as the open sharing of teaching practices that empower community development specialists to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues.

Applications of social media platforms in community development may also grow to include new approaches for assessment of learning progress, accreditation and collaborative learning as claimed by the Anonymous (2007). Brahimi and Sarirete noted that in the traditional learning system, the community development agents serve as the repository and transmitter of knowledge. However, the teaching-pattern-potentials of social media
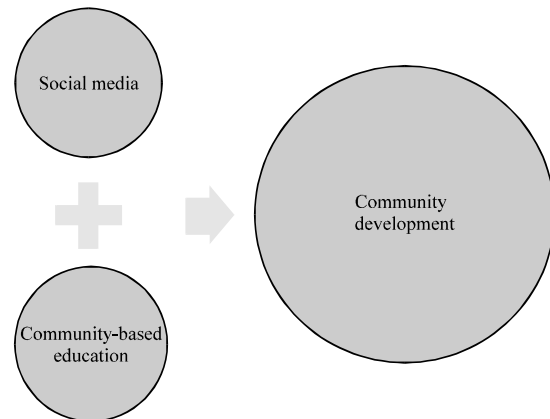


Fig. 1: Indicates the relationship among social media platforms, community-based education and community development

as regards community development is generally inverted and may focus on the learner securing most information by interacting with peers in more developed communities and accessing, in a flexible way, vital information and resources open and free (Brahimi and Sarirete, 2015). According to Putnik *et al.* (2016), social media networking concerning community based education issues must be applied in two different dimensions. First, it can be applied to organize community-based education process as a social network-based process. This will be useful for peer assessment, discussions and collaborative tasks in achieving community development goals. Second, it can be applied to analyze the interactions between members of a community using techniques from the social network analysis field. Morgado *et al.* noted that people who participate in this learning event become part of a learning community which to some extent is also a community of interests or a community of practice (Fig. 1).

## CONCLUSION

Community development is a collective work of both community members and community development agents. Community development efforts in recent times must be in accord with ICT in general and social media in particular for it to effectively and efficiently attain community development goals while maintaining minimum cost in terms of time, energy and other resources. Community-based education is a way forward in pursuing community development as a goal. This form of education can be fostered via. ICT and social media for maximum impact.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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