

## **Social Networking Application: What Is Their Quality and How Can They Be Adopted in Open Distance Learning Environments?**

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**Abstract :** Social networking applications and tools have become compelling platforms for generating and sharing knowledge across the world. Social networking applications and tools refer to a variety of social media platforms which include Facebook, Twitter WhatsApp, blogs and Wikis. The most popular of these platforms are Facebook, with 2.41 billion active users on a monthly basis, followed by WhatsApp with 1.6 billion users and Twitter with 330 million users. These communication platforms have not only impacted social lives but have also impacted students' learning, across different delivery modes in higher education: distance, conventional and blended learning modes. With this amount of interest in these platforms, knowledge sharing has gained importance within the context in which it is required. In open distance learning (ODL) contexts, social networking platforms can offer students and teachers the platform on which to create and share knowledge, and form learning collaborations. Thus, they can serve as support mechanisms to increase interactions and reduce isolation and loneliness inherent in ODL. Despite this potential and opportunity, research indicates that many ODL teachers are not inclined to using social media tools in learning. Although it is unclear why these tools are uncommon in these environments, concerns raised in the literature have indicated that many teachers have not mastered the art of teaching with technology. Using technological, pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) and product quality theory, and Bloom's Taxonomy as lenses, this paper is aimed at; firstly, assessing the quality of three social media applications: Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, in order to determine the extent to which they are suitable platforms for teaching and learning, in terms of content generation, information sharing and learning collaborations. Secondly, the paper demonstrates the application of teaching, learning and assessment using Bloom's Taxonomy.

**Keywords :** distance education, quality, social networking tools, TPACK

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