ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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TikTok can be useful for training

One might think that TikTok and education are worlds apart, but the opposite seems to be true and social media may be showing us the way to the future of learning.

To date TikTok has over 1.5 billion users and of these 1 billion are monthly active users. What's more, TikTok is used by 30.25% of the world's internet users and over 3 billion people downloaded the app in 2023.

Looking at this data, one would think that TikTok has practically conquered the world. The popularity of this social is due to the short duration of the content and the fact that it attracts the younger generation in particular.

The pandemic has also made TikTok popular in the field of education, as it is a great way to reach students and employees in a purposeful and fun way, at a time when education was facing the obstacles of distance and widespread anxiety. There is therefore an 'educational push' on TikTok, which is opening up opportunities for teachers to connect with the younger generation in a whole new way. Living in a modern world requires educators to acquire skills on how to integrate technology into school and training activities to make lessons more viable and enjoyable for the new generations. In other words, to catch up with the times. There is a variety of new applications and social media that are used by educators as educational tools and in this article we explore how TikTok is emerging as a learning medium.

Why we talk about TikTok as an educational tool

There are several reasons why TikTok is accepted as a tool that can help education. Let us look at the three main reasons.

1. Since the pandemic, mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets are no longer seen as a distraction but as tools that can be used to make life easier for students and to better meet the educational needs of the younger generation. Social media, in particular TikTok, are actively helping to ensure that the technology we use on a daily basis can meet the needs of students.
2. Not only that, TikTok has been very involved in reaching out to users during the pandemic to the extent that in May 2020, the platform announced the #LearnOnTikTok initiative, due to the high demand for educational content from young people on TikTok. The initiative brought together 800 famous names, media publishers, educational institutions, experts and professionals to create educational material to be shared on TikTok. In parallel, the platform created a $50 million 'Creative Learning Fund' for educational content.
3. A **Study.com research** looking at TikTok users in the US found that 1 in 4 use the platform for educational purposes. Of those who use TikTok for educational purposes, 69% said that the content helped them complete their homework. When asked why they use TikTok for educational purposes, 60% of respondents said that the app is easy to access, 57% that it is easy to understand, 51% that there is a lot of content and 47% that it is free.

Increasing student involvement

One of the problems in integrating technology into education is keeping students involved. Standing in front of a computer alone in a room makes the learning experience more boring, and consequently it is easier to get distracted. Fortunately, TikTok is very interactive and offers countless ways to capture students' attention and engage them in the lesson content. This is evidenced by the fact that the hashtag #LearnOnTikTok has about 450 billion views. The hashtag is part of a TikTok campaign that was launched in 2020, close to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The popularity of TikTok learning material is part of a trend that is increasingly capturing the attention of education experts, this trend is micro learning (some experts make a further distinction between **micro and nano learning**). Many members of Generation Z like short training content that can always be at hand, rather than long courses where the content is only available once, when the teacher is lecturing. In corporate training, the concept of micro-learning is already popular and widespread. This

concept assumes that an employee can access the training content from his or her smartphone and that it is organised in a clear and concise manner so that the employee can have access to instructions on how to perform a task. TikTok is the perfect way to deliver content that fits the principles of micro-learning.

The future of learning will also be social

TikTok is a powerful educational tool because it is first and foremost a social network.

Users make new friends, browse content and discover new communities with like-minded people. With 1.5 billion users, TikTok has surpassed better-known social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest and Snapchat.

Regardless of TikTok's popularity at this time, it is clear that social media are the main vehicles for all kinds of content, including educational content. Adapting educational content to social media as much as possible can only do users good. Considering that the people who use social media the most are young (63% of TikTok users are under 29 years old) it is almost a responsibility to the younger generation to ensure that the content on these platforms can teach new and useful things.

Another reason why social media are becoming important for education is due to the durability of the content on these platforms. There are several **researches** that show that new generations have a lower attention span than in the past; therefore, a video duration of a few minutes attracts more attention. Consequently, adopting technologies that can meet these needs such as social media is becoming an increasingly common option according to experts. A recent **study** looked at the use of TikTok as an educational tool and overall, the results of this research indicate a positive response, as the majority of respondents preferred it over traditional training methods. To date, there is a great deal of research on the effectiveness of TikTok for education and most of it is still in progress; therefore, we should wait a few years before we can see results. However, considering the interest of the scientific community on this topic, it is not unrealistic to think that in the future social media will be more present in education than they are today.

The limitations

Although TikTok highlights many trends that could characterise the future of education, it also has some undeniable drawbacks. First of all, having an average video length of 60 seconds: this prevents users from receiving a complete education or developing particularly advanced skills. Therefore, TikTok can never be considered a complete training tool.

Moreover, since anyone can post a video on TikTok, misinformation can be a problem. According to the **Study.com survey**, most TikTok users judge the trustworthiness of content by the number of likes (55%) and views (53%), as well as the number of followers of the creator (51%). Less than half, 44%, said they checked the sources of a video before considering it credible.

Using TikTok in the classroom

The goal is always to increase student engagement and in this sense TikTok can be a double-edged sword. It can be a great source of distraction if used by students in class to access content not relevant to the course. At the same time, it can be an asset if teachers can access resources in the classroom, for example by using the hashtag #TeachersOfTikTok. Many TikTok lesson plans and instructional videos for teachers are available on the platform.

For clarity, here are some of the ways in which TikTok is used in the classroom by teachers:

- Start lessons with a TikTok video to encourage discussion by asking students whether the creator of the video is right or wrong. Students learn to question content and learn more about a topic before sharing it with their friends.
- Teachers use the platform to post short lesson summaries to encourage revision at home and to push students to engage in school lessons after school hours.
- If you post lesson summaries, it is a good idea to activate the comments section and encourage students to comment or ask questions about your videos. Some students may not feel comfortable raising their hands in class, and this function offers more insecure students a way to participate in class discussions. Through the comment response function, you can create a video response to questions or concerns and share it directly with your students.
- Another way to encourage student engagement is the duet function that allows you to post a video side-by-side with

another creator's video on TikTok. For example, if you create a TikTok with some maths or French questions, you can ask students to "duet together to answer these questions" or "duet together to practise your French". Students can then create videos following your video and show their work. If they do not feel comfortable posting on the app, they can save the video on their device and send it directly to you or show it to you in class the next day.

A way to teach responsible use of social media

Unfortunately, the internet can be a dangerous place and social media can be vehicles for hate messages or cyberbullying. Introducing these tools in schools could be a way to better educate the younger generation about the dangers they can run into on social media and the internet in general and what is right or wrong to do when online.

Prospects for the future

It is still too early to say to what extent TikTok will establish itself as a useful tool for education. However, it is clear that the numbers regarding the use of the platform for educational purposes, the commitment of the platform itself to also being an educational tool, and the interest of the scientific community are indications that TikTok has the potential to be a resource for training.