Social Media and E-Learning:

Linking usage habits of Social Media Tools and the effectiveness of E-Learning in China and Germany

First Name: **Andreas**
Last Name: **Scheel**
Your Email: **andreas.scheel@gmx.de**

E-Leader Berlin 2012

June 5, 2012
Introduction

Changes in digital communication influence ways of learning

Impact of social media on learning: enhanced collaboration in learning communities

“This net-centric generation values their ability to use the Web to create a self-paced, customized, on-demand learning path that includes multiple forms of interactive, social and self-publishing media tools.” (Baird & Fisher, 2005)

Problem: cultural background influences the way of using social media → different impact on e-learning

Consequence: Adapt e-learning platforms to various social media usage habits
**Research question:** Is there a link between usage habits of social media and the effectiveness of e-learning?

**Subquestions:**
- success factors of e-learning platforms?
- active social media users = active e-learners?
- Do Chinese people use social media differently than German people?
- Do Chinese people use e-learning differently than German people?
  - same e-learning platform in different countries?
- How do we build up an e-learning platform in a culture we are not familiar with?
- Should Chinese e-learning platforms follow the rules of Chinese social media platforms?

**Initial problem:** How to build up an e-learning platform for the Carl Benz Academy - the Executive MBA-programme of Mercedes Benz China Limited
Online social networks and e-learning in China:
- Growing importance of social media
- Majority of social media users share content that already exists
- Western countries: spread of own ideas + more collaborative
- Reasons: different learning cultures

Practices of learning:
- demonstration
- tracing
- repeated copying
- active memorisation

- participation
- dialogue
- discussion
- Observation

(Jin & Cortazzi, 2006)
(Chatti, Jarke & Frosch-Wilke, 2007)
The need for e-learning in China:
Reasons for adopting a blendes learning strategy:
- growing demand for education
- shortages of teaching staff
- growing number of companies → increasing need of part-time study programmes
- creation of new cities → jobs require further education
- learning = way to overcome the bimodal distribution of wealth

Challenge for companies: bridging the knowledge gap

Solution: running own education programmes by using virtual learning environments (VLE)

Advantages of VLEs: unlimited access to learning tools (e.g. document sharing systems, teacher assistance, discussion boards)
Foundation of the Carl Benz Academy:
- MBA programme in collaboration with Peking University, Berlin University for Professional Studies and L.A.’s Woodbury University.
- Benefit from e-learning experience of foreign educational systems
- Blended learning approach
- Collaborative online platform: foster exchange, innovation, shared purpose

Obstacles: VLE unfamiliar for CBA students, implementation of online units accompanied by training sessions

Question: reasons for these problems?

Assumption: Besides cultural differences, communication problems and different experience with e-learning, usage habits of social media determine significantly the effectiveness of e-learning.
• Setting:
  - students from different cultures using an identically constructed platform
  - unique opportunity to examine how the same e-learning platform is perceived by students with different cultural background
  - students stay in their own cultural learning communities (no interaction) → findings extremely relevant
  - Collaborative online platform: foster exchange, innovation, shared purpose

• Survey:
  - Among 30 Chinese and 30 German students
  - Aim: identify social media usage habits

• Measure of the learning success: comparison of the results of the first online units

• Analysis: Do different user habits have an impact on the success of e-learning platforms?
First results:

**Chinese respondents:**

**Social media:**
- only 20% studied abroad
- mostly influenced by Chinese educational system
- 80% have a social media account and use it every day or more than once a week
- most relevant purpose: share information (100%)

**German respondents:**

**Social media:**
- only 13% studied abroad
- mostly influenced by German educational system
- 86% have a social media account and use it more than once a week
- most relevant purpose: stay in contact with friends (29%), share information (43%), create own web presence (29%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Chinese respondents:</strong></th>
<th><strong>German respondents:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>E-Learning:</strong></td>
<td><strong>E-Learning:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 60% prefer to learn in groups but also 60% prefer lectures</td>
<td>- 75% prefer to learn alone but no special preference regarding lectures and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- work mostly in teams</td>
<td>- 50% work mostly in changing environments (in teams and alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- think that they learn the most in workshops</td>
<td>- think that they learn the most in online units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- suggestions: more reading material (e.g copies of books)</td>
<td>- suggestions: more interactivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Collecting more data in order to get significant results.

• Pay attention to other important factors such as age, educational system etc.

• Working on the measurement of the effectiveness of e-learning platforms.

• Provide recommendations regarding the construction of VLEs in countries with different cultural background.

• Do we need a sixth cultural dimension (Hofstede) called “social media usage habits”?
Thank you for your attention

Our Education System
References:


http://www.scio.gov.cn/zxbd/wz/201006/t667385.htm