A Phenomenological Study of College Teachers' Use of Social Media in Teaching

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Abstract

Lectures and other traditional teaching methodologies employed by University faculty have come to be scrutinized for their impersonal approach especially in this modern digital age. Recently, social media or academic networking sites have become increasingly popular as learning and teaching resources in higher education, providing students with increased opportunities for educational engagement. This research endeavors to discuss the extent of use of social media among college instructors and professorsin their instructional-learning praxis. The participants were 10 faculty of the College of Teacher Education. To gather data, they underwent FGD and semi structured interview. The results showed (1) Teachers use social media in education because of its convenience and significance. (2) Social media as a teaching tool is effective because students are engaged and connected. (3) There are challenges hurdled in the use of social media such as Internet connection and privacy issues. The study recommends that higher education adopt the flipped classroom format, as using social media is found to be effective. Furthermore, higher education institutions may cox the educational technology decisions and policy to accommodate digital tools in teaching and learning in the 21st century.

Introduction

Social Media is becoming a ubiquitous platform for social interaction in our daily lives (Siemens & Weller, 2011). Communications become interactive dialogue among individuals, communities and organizations because social media is mobile-based technologies as it is also web-based. Social media permeates every orifice of today's society with people easily able to be updated with the latest happenings. People are aware though the different on line sites and applications like Facebook and Twitter. Facebook was originally developed in Harvard University as a college project before outspreading to other colleges, universitiesand states in the US.

The office of communications in 2016 gathered the usage statistics and found that 66% of all adults aged 16+ have a profile on at least one social networking site. It is safe to assume that the percentage could be potentially higher among those of university age. In fact a recent study revealed that most teenagers spend 20 hours per week on internet use and computer screens, a third, spend closer to 45 hours per week, and about 8 percent are exposed to more than 53 hours of 'screen-time' per week on average (Retrieved from http://www.sciencedaily.com). This means to say that teenagers and adults are engrossed on line.

In this digital age, we cannot deny the impact that social media has on our lives.As revealed in 2016 by Maria Ressa, the CEO of Rappler, more than 11 million photos are uploaded every hour, nearly 3 billion clicked a "like" button per day in Facebook. The number of tweets grows around 200% a year. Teenagers in this era belong to the igeneration. iPhone, iPod, Wii, iTunes are among the digital technologies popular with children and adolescents. These technologies make possible highly individualized activities (Rosen, 2011).

Rosen 2011 declared that the students in this generation are immersed in a different world. A world outside the walls of the classroom, a world of technology; thus they are branded to belong in the igeneration. Many children of this generation spend most of their walking hours using gadgets and technology.

Students are immersed in a world different from the classroom. The four walls of the classroom are not as animated and as not entertaining as their iworld.Thus, it is interesting to look at the role and extent of social media use in education today, ten years after this was developed by Mark Zuckerberg and his college friends.

Karademir & Alper, 2011 found out that the use of social media for educational purposes has been seen more often compared tothe use of computers in educational practices, e learning and distance education supported education. Smith (2007) stressed that it is unavoidable that social media will take part in education. He further suggested that we should call it academic network instead of social networks.

Statement of Objectives

The aim of this study is to discuss the faculty's extent on the use of social media as a platform for the enrichment vis-à-vis reinforcement of teaching. Specifically, the discussion leads to answer how teachers make use of social media as corroboration of teaching; what types of social media are used by teachers; and how teachers perceive social media as a tool in the process of teaching and learning in a mobile, fast-paced world.

Literature Review

Social media networking and technology has evolved into a necessity in people's lives at present(Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010). The present day college students are exposed to the new, emerging technologies in every orifice of their lives (Browning, Gerlich, & Westermann, 2011).

The networking sites and social media tools enable students to connect and with one another and at the same time express and share their creativity. WCER (2011). A lot of media applications have gained popularity among users and are used both for education and personal uses. Most lecturers or College faculty believe in the effect of social media use. Many of them post content for students to read or view when they are outside class.

Social media has now transformed from being used informally like simply uploading pictures for fun and connecting with friends and exchanging news, to the formal educational settings of discussion and information dissemination. It has gained formal acceptance by students, faculty and administrators. This can be attributed to the permeating nature and pervasive informational function of interactive digital and mobile technologies, (Aviles & Eastman, 2012; Barnes & Jacobsen, 2012; Voorn & Kommers, 2013). A major paradigm shift ishappening in education today. Tasks can be done virtually which may require students to post comments, download files, upload pictures or files or read materials and content shared by the teacher. (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011).

These interactive mobile technologies encompass the 21st century skills and attributes such as creativity, collaboration, communication, convergence and community (Friedman & Friedman, 2013). The heart of the instructional–learning praxis is the collaborative participation of the students through discursive discourse of the lessons. The use of social media answers this deliverable.

Zanamwe, et al. (2013), Greehow and Gleason (2012), Junco, Elasky and Heighberger (2012) revealed in their researches, that those students who achieved better in their communication, technology and research skills, support in helping students connection with application concepts. They also increase student engagement in the lessons discussed. This is amanifestation that social media technologies contribute positively even beyond the classroom. This impacts his life experience, knowledge and skills, which develops over a period of time. However, to fully maximize the benefits of social media, the learners have to do their share by participating in the production of knowledge gained through the collaborative interaction among other students. This is deemed positively compared to just consuming whatever is given. The winning formula is for one to contribute to the deepening of knowledge in the process of teaching and learning by doling out ideas through collaborative thinking.

New Media Consortium, 2011 stressed that key trends brought about by budding technologies will have impact in the next several years. The Internet offers a wide array of resources and relationships; an environment of anytime, anywhere learning collaboration (Project Tomorrow, 2010). The professional and academic arena requires digital media literacy, which can be attained through increased use and exposure to the new social media.

New forms of publishing and authorship such as e-book and mobile devices will have a spot and will be more prevalent in schools. Reality and game based learning will be the next interest among students. In the long term, computing devices that require sensitive gestures which are often called "the movement and touch" innovations will eventually coxthe educational technology decision and policy.

Numerous researches have proven the importance and impact of social media in education and how effective it can be as a tool to support learning. Lecturers can incorporate social media in their courses in creative ways (Seechaliao, 2015). They can craft activities and learning tasks which students may do virtually. Social media allows students to share views and ideas and even instructional materials to collaborate on learning. Education

acknowledges the non-replaceable role of social media technology. Thus, many college professors and lectures have adopted an integrated approach to the use of social media in their teaching (Srichoosin & Satiman, 2012). Likewise, learners have adopted integrated social media for learning (Roblyer & others, 2010). Today, social media are used as reinforcement and supplementary tools to support the teaching learning process in this igeneration of digital natives. This practice has created strong interaction on student-student, student-content, and student-instructor. Moreover, the use of social media has improved student' critical and problem solving skills as well as inquiry and questioning techniques (gulbahar etc., 2010; Gulbahar, 2012).

Methodology

3.1 Research Design. Thisresearch paper employs the qualitative designto investigate the phenomenon of interest. At this present day, it is undeniable that people of almost all walks of life are so engaged on line with social networking activities in the priority list.

3.2 Research Participants. The informants of the study were 10 facultymembers of the College of Teacher Education of the Cebu Normal University who were randomly selected.Prior to participating, they were given consent form and were oriented on the nature of the study.The participants are aged 30-40 years old. They all have Masters degree relevant to their teaching loads. There were no particular criteria in choosing the informants of this study. They were randomly chosen as part of the faculty of the College of Teacher Education.

3.3 Research Environment. The investigation was conducted in the Cebu Normal University located at Osmena Blvd., Cebu City. The study specifically focused on the College of Teacher Education, whichis one of the flagship programs of the university. The university was established in 1902 as a summer institute of the Philippine Normal School. CNU became a chartered college in 1976 and in 1998, it has earned the university status.

3.4 Research Instrument. The study utilized a semi-structured interview guide crafted by the researcher. The interview questions were given via Facebook Messenger. Then focused group discussions were done to validate the veracity of answers.

3.5 Data Collection Method. The study utilized a semi-structured interview, as well as electronic interview using social mediamessenger chat room and focused group discussions. This method was chosen because of its flexibility of coverage and participants were free to introduce issues that are relevant to the study, which the researcher had not thought of; thus the ordering of the questions is less important. The interviews were recorded and filed for analysis. As data are saturated, the researcher categorized them per cluster of units of meaning and formed themes.

3.5. Ethical Considerations. All participants were informed on the nature and aim of the study. They were given consent form and were oriented that they may dismiss their participation at any point of the study should they find it uncomfortable or may be affecting their work or any other aspect of their life. Their participation was considered with utmost respect and confidentiality.

Results & Discussion

4.1 Use of Social Media in Teaching

The research informants shared that they make use of social media in the praxis of their work as lecturers. They also elaborated on the purposes of using these social media platforms.

Participant 1, "*providing easy access to my lesson and research more ideas about the topic that I am teaching mam. and then easy also for videos related to my topic and use it also as platform to display their work mam. they make a poem and posted it sa fb...they answer questions that I posted in fb. they make their own video clip and upload it sa you tube."*

Participant 2, *"I believe social media is a great tool in learning and teaching as well. I usually download ready made powerpoint presentations for my lessons. All I need to do is edit a little bit. It saves so much time for my preparation."*

Participant 3. *"Yes maam, I always use social media especially Facebook and youtube, nindut man sad ma "in" ta sa mga students kai mga batan.on mao may uso pud."*

Participant 4, *"It has already been established how social media/technological tools have provided more opportunities for students to explore the topic in a different way... cater students individuality and interest...make teacher's job easier...make information available anywhere, anytime"*

Participant 5, *"these apps are helpful & useful because its just a click away*
As a teacher, information like current updates are readily available for cognitive consumption. Its language is comprehensive & could easily be understood even to the students level"

Participant 6, *"Yes. These are helpful because this is a platform in which teachers and students can interact locally or globally/internationally. The sources can vary: website links, people source (expert or peer) and many more. Easy monitoring, scoring and grading and connect to student even away from the physical classroom. "*

Participant 7, *"They are indeed very helpful because it aids in our teaching other than the books and other references we have.. for Facebook, they can give us easy access to our students (group chat)*
Youtube-for TLE, it basically needs actual videos on how to do something like cooking a particular dish or making a particular craft
YTD - it downloads the specific videos that i wish my students will watch
Prezi and slideshare - there are a lot of available presentations of our specific topics..
Google - our friend when we are confused of something."

Participant 8, *"The apps were helpful because they aid the teaching and learning process. I download videos from youtube to be shown to the students, exchange messages (reminders or assignments on matters dealt in class) with them through facebook, and access the outputs of my students which were submitted through gmail and yahoo.*

Participant 9, *"The apps were helpful because they aid the teaching and learning process. I download videos from youtube to be shown to the students, exchange messages (reminders or assignments on matters dealt in class) with them through facebook, and access the outputs of my students which were submitted through gmail and yahoo."*

Participant 10, *"facebook group-to post for announcements and posting of content materials and activities,Messenger chat for group discussions ,queries and clarification of concepts discussed and submissiin of tasks or assignment ,GMAIL for submission of requirements, YOUTUBE for video presentation downloads, etc. yes, they are most helpful in my graduate students coz they easy access to the materials presented in class ,it saved time, money and effort because they can submit their outputs online"*

The participants all answered in unison that they use social media in teaching. No doubt the social media has penetrated the very aspect of professional lives of teachers. Social media has exploded and has renovated the way we interrelate with one another – anytime, anywhere.

It was observed during the interview that university professors and faculty did not have any hesitations to use social media as part of their tools in teaching. There was even no difficulty in convincing students on the value and importance of social media because the students themselves are very much exposed and have already been won over by its value. Most of the informants made use of Facebook, Messenger, Pinterest, Google, Slide share, YouTube in their teaching. Social media provides an avenue for teachers to communicate with students using their language; the language of the digital natives.

Social media enables instructors to build connection with students. Using these platforms, learning can occur even without the physical presence of the teacher. The use of Facebook groups helps in forum and other discussion; moreover, is that this model for homework promotes collaboration. The students answer to the posted questions and in turn also question others building the communication and collaboration among students. This promotes academic discussion beyond the classroom.

4.2 Perception on Social Media as a Teaching Tool

Students increasingly want their instructors to use social media as a learning tool (Berame, 2010). Social mediahas enabled students, teachers and parents to share information in a second and has created a new sense of community. In education, the use of social media is dubbed as using innovations. Today's learners consider the use of social media as an innovation because it is not only educational but also engaging. Many minds are better

than one. This learning format attracts the younger socially conscious learners (J. Light of Harvard University School of Education). Social media can network people across the world; thus, using it as a teaching tool can help students appreciate the global picture.

Social media plays an important role in improving communication between students, instructions and the surrounding campus community especially in the higher education setting. Although there are many other types of communication tools for learning, the advantage of social media is that most students are already in the level of experts. They are fluent users of these media.

Participant 1, *"I do not need to convince my students that we make use of social media. Sa tinu.od lang, bisan wala pako mu say nila that we will make a facebook group, they already have plans to create one for our class. In fact they have a lot of FB groups already for their previous subjects."*

Participant 2, *"Students think that when a teacher uses social media, this teacher is 'modern'*

Participant 3, "social media is very helpful. Dali ra kaayu maka announce and engaged kaayu ang mga bata."

Participant 4, "*I believe social media is a great tool in learning, those apps mentioned has helped me and my students in teaching and learning collaboration. It provides additional and rich inputs in exploring solid informations on a subject matter. A one click away and hullah! You've got every information you want to experience, explore and learn."*

Participant 5, *"Although I know there are down sides of using social media, but more jud ang positive." For me as a teacher, I find slideshare so helpful in my teaching, as well as Youtube and the many videos there are. So easy to download and very interesting to motive my students."*

Participant 6, *"Students feel that I am a 'cool' teacher once I tell them that our class will create an FB group or chatroom." Although I am already almost golden in my age, I feel young when I use social media as a tool in my teaching.*

Participant 7, *"Sometimes there are students who have difficulty with the Internet connection. These are the ones who are financially challenged. Mao pud ni akong problema if mag pa assignment ko nila then they don't have access to the Internet. But what I can say is that, social media is a very useful tool in my teaching."*

Participant 8, "In social media, say in messenger for example, murag forgivable rapud if students write words in wrong spelling. Murag so flexible and understanding ra ko in terms of student answering in the messenger chat some discussions we need to have. "

Participant 9, *"When I use social media, my students feel excited, thus I can conclude that they are happy and they liked the idea of me using social media."*

Participant 10, *"Social media does magic in my teaching."*

In education, social- networking sites or academic networking sites bargain opportunities to link with other students, experts, educators, administrators, alumni both within and outside the institutions. Scholars praise social-networking tools for their capability to attract, motivate and engage students in meaningful communicative practice, content exchange, and collaboration (Zaidieh, 2012).

Before, teachers find the use of social media as too informal. However with the changing times, they learn to adapt to the concerns of the students. The students in the first place were the ones who opened up the idea of creating an FB group for easy transact of information or announcements. If social media are used as an avenue to communicate with students, then teachers embraced the idea of using it as a teaching tool or platform as well.

4.3 Challenges in the use of social media in education

Social media lend itself to a multitude of applications in the academic setting; however participants in the study shared some challenges in the utilization of these platforms in their teaching.

Participant 1, *"Internet connection jud ang problem because in the faculty room for example, ma off kalit, ma ibot then waste of time mag on napud balik maam."*

Participant 2, *"sometime too much discussion to the point that students can deviate from the topic. Because*

communication is just in a click, it is so easy for students to blurr out ideas by writing down."

Participant 3, *"sometimes loading, walang net and be careful sa data if it is reliable or not. sometimes not all student can do online kay wala daw budget to buy load."*
Participant 4, *"The issue I have is about redoing or undoing something. Say for example in FB messenger, we cannot edit already what has been written. "*

Participant 5, "students have equal opportunities to participate in the discussion however there are really those who choose to be quiet."

Participant 6, *""Not all students has the gadget to access social media and not all students can afford and have the extra money to go to Internet cafe..."*

Participant 7, "Poor internet connection" and sometime miscommunication. Ang akong gipasabot dili mao ang nakuha sa mga students"

Participant 8, *"There are times when we become dependent on the social media that we cannot continue working without the internet." We might become slaves of the Internet in the future because we are becoming too dependent."*

Participant 9, *"sometimes teacher also has no load hehehe" and sometimes it can be very time consuming* and also the *availability of gadgets like laptop or phones, willingness and openness of students to use these tools for school-related activities"*

These social media are sometimes inaccessible when power and Internet are down.It would take a lot of time to wait for the network to load if the connectivity is a problem. Getting connected to the Internet is seen as a problem. Unless, one has mobile data, then they can download and post materials for the class.

Some social networking sites provide pieces of information that are sometimes inaccurate, so it is a must that using them be coupled with printed materials like books and researches. It is a challenge on the part of the teacher to recheck the validity of the information presented in the social media used in class.

Another challenge is miscommunication. E-learning is virtual; thus, there is an absence of the face to face interaction which may help in clarifying areas which are vague. Additionally, there are some learners who prefer to express orally. In e learning, they may face difficulty in expressing in their views in writing.

There is also the issue on privacy and space. Social networking sites are open for anyone who wants to participate. It is a challenge for some students who are very much concerned about privacy of their personal information. Some students also find it a great deal to share thoughts on line.

The data revealed that 2 major themes characterized the participants' responses and extent of use of the use of social media in education as academic network specifically in the teaching process.

4.4 Theme 1. Convenience and accessibility
All the participants mentioned that using social media can very well help them in their dissemination of information such as announcements without the hassle of gathering the students physically.
The social networking is easy and very user friendly. In just a click, everything happens quickly in terms of accessing, updating, reviewing and editing learning plans and materials needed any time and anywhere. It is easy to begin and facilitate bulletin board discussion any time for students to participate which can build up further topics for conversation.

Accessibility and flexibility are among the most attractive features of e- learning in social networking. The face to face approach on the other hand offers a different level of emotional touch and understanding. Therefore, the blended approach is the most preferred pedagogy combining flexibility and online components in social media and the emotional security and interface in the face-to-face approach. The blended approach can further motivate students to complete educational tasks especially in the higher education setting.

4.5 Theme 2. Significance of Use
The use of social media is not just to address the clamor of the digital natives. There is a very rich source of reinforcement and enrichment input the students can get from social media. Thus, teachers use these platforms

to supplement classroom discussion.They provide up to date information needed to deepen and reinforce lesson discussion.

Students understand better and increase retention using social media. This is attributed to the many elements in e-learning such as the strong interaction among students and teachers, quizzes on line and multimedia. Through social media, common interests and activities build online communities. Students learn interchangeably from both inside and outside of the classroom. Instructors gain immediate feedback from students and constant communication with students produce an effective instructional technology. A culture of learning is effectively formed through networking technology.

Using social media in education helps in the strong understanding of concepts of students in higher education. Using this tool, students learn anytime anywhere. They are responsible enough on their own learning being adult learners.. A key point in social media theory is that it with its anytime anywhere accommodation of learning, it can digitalize the future.

Conclusion

A new culture of teaching has immersed with the use of social media technology. Faculty and students in the college setting have adopted the new technologies, which can help make communication easy and collaboration among students and teachers.

Integrating academic networking and social media into higher educationteaching and learning makes sense. The faculty finds social media use very convenient and significant. Faculty of the college of teacher education in Cebu Normal University has tapped into the impendingprofits of social media in the learning praxis.

"The best teachers I've ever had have used technology to enhance learning, including using Facebook pages for upcoming projects or planned online chats about books we read in class." (Benmar, 2016). Facebook for oneis avaluable resource to support educational endeavors such as communication and collaborations among students and lecturers. Therefore, Facebook as a networking site has been adopted by students widely, (Roblyer & others, 2010). Lecturers' role in social media was more concentrated on posting, creating and commenting.

It is therefore strongly recommended that the university allot budget on strong internet infrastructure in the College of Teacher Education to address some of the challenges in the use of technology such as social media as well as provide further trainings and updates to teachers on using other forms of social media which can also be very helpful in the teaching practices of the faculty. The study further recommends the use of flipped classroom format, as using social media is found to be effective. Higher education institutions may cox the educational technology decisions and policy to accommodate digital tools in teaching and learning in the 21st century

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