

The Use of Social Media for Education Among Teacher Trainees

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Abstract

Social media is becoming vital as communication tools but there is inadequate data to describe the patterns of usage in terms of education. This study aims to identify the types of social media that teacher trainees frequently use and the perception of teacher trainees on the use of social media for education. Respondents are 401 teacher trainees from one of the Institutes of Teacher Education in Malaysia. Data is collected quantitatively through questionnaire distribution and is supported by qualitative data through interviews involving 10 participants. Findings show, teacher trainees frequently use WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Twitter and Telegram. Teacher trainees have a very positive perception on the use of social media for education. The implication is, lecturers can use the social media mostly frequented by teacher trainees to design and channel teaching-learning activities so as to contribute more effectively towards the improvement of the academic performance of teacher trainees.

Keywords: perception, communication tools, social media, education, performance

Abstrak

Media sosial menjadi semakin penting sebagai alat komunikasi tetapi data sedia ada tidak mencukupi untuk menerangkan corak penggunaan dari sudut pendidikan. Kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti jenis-jenis media sosial yang kerap digunakan oleh siswa pendidik dan persepsi mereka mengenai penggunaan media sosial untuk pendidikan. Responden terdiri daripada seramai 401 orang siswa pendidik sebuah Institut Pendidikan Guru di Malaysia. Data dikumpulkan secara kuantitatif melalui pengedaran soal selidik dan disokong oleh data kualitatif melalui temu bual melibatkan 10 orang peserta. Hasil kajian menunjukkan, jenis-jenis media sosial yang kerap digunakan ialah WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Twitter dan Telegram. Siswa pendidik mempunyai persepsi yang sangat positif terhadap penggunaan media sosial untuk pendidikan. Implikasinya, pensyarah boleh menggunakan jenis-jenis media sosial yang kerap dilawati oleh siswa pendidik untuk merekabentuk dan menyalurkan aktiviti-aktiviti pengajaran-pembelajaran agar dapat menyumbang dengan lebih berkesan ke arah peningkatan prestasi akademik siswa pendidik.

Kata Kunci: persepsi, alat komunikasi, media sosial, pendidikan, prestasi

Introduction

Social media has entered every classroom and the classroom of teacher trainees in the teacher education campus is of no exception. It allows them to seek and retrieve information from various sources. They are also able to communicate and manipulate information for educational and non-educational purposes such as finding learning-related information, completing assignments, delivering presentations, and communicating with friends. In order to find out the types of social media teacher trainees frequently use and the perception of teacher trainees on the use of social media for education, this study was conducted at one of the Institutes of Teacher Education in Malaysia. Respondents were teacher trainees of the Bachelor's Degree in Education Programme. Since its establishment, the institute has produced competent teachers who are able to provide excellent teaching and learning. Therefore, this study is undertaken to identify the types of social media that teacher trainees frequently use and to explore their perception on the use of social media for education.

This study is significant because the findings can be used by lecturers and stakeholders for the purpose of education. Lecturers can incorporate social media into academic course content and it is a

challenge which needs to be employed for continuous professional development and towards the improvement of the academic performance of teacher trainees. Since continuous improvement is necessary, recommendations can be put forth based on the findings in order to assist teacher trainees to become effective teachers.

Problem Statement

Faculty of higher education are gradually relying more on social media to enhance instruction (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Jacquemin, Smelser, & Bernot, 2014). Ye, Toshimori & Horita (2017) reveal, as various social media are expected to be used extensively in the future, information education for younger generations will continue to be important. As a result, whatever social media that teacher trainees frequently use modify their acquisition of knowledge and their communication with their lecturers and between themselves. Thus, it is vital for lecturers to know the types of social media that teacher trainees frequently use and their perception on the use of social media for education in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as instructional purposes in the classroom. This is in line with the aspiration of the Ministry of Education (MOE), as stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025, (Ministry of Education, 2015), "to strengthen the quality of education in the process of improving the quality of learning in Malaysia". Hence, the gap between social media and the lack of research in this area, make it necessary to embark on this research.

Research Objectives

This study is undertaken with the aim to identify the types of social media that teacher trainees frequently use and their perception on the use of social media for education. Findings from this study will be analysed and some recommendations will be forwarded.

Research Questions

1. Which types of social media do teacher trainees frequently use?
2. What is the perception of teacher trainees on the use of social media for education?

Literature Review

Social media is a web-based and mobile application that allows individuals and organisations to create, engage and share new user-generated or existing content, in digital environments that support collaboration through multi-way communication and enable deliberation among stakeholders (Kaplan & Haenlein (2010); Bryer & Zavatarro (2011); Davis, Canche, Deil-Amen & Rios-Angular (2012)). Examples are Facebook, MySpace, World of Warcraft, Sim City, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Skype, Tango, Telegram, and Viber (Schill, 2011; Junco, 2014).

This study focusses on the teacher trainees' perception based on the Self-Perception Theory. Under this theory, according to Daryl (1972) the individuals come to understand their own attitudes, emotions, and other internal states partially by inferring them from observations of their own overt behaviour and/or the circumstances in which this behaviour occurs. Thus, to the extent that internal cues are weak, ambiguous, or uninterpretable, the individual is functionally in the same position as an outside observer, an observer who must necessarily rely upon those same external cues to infer the individual's inner states.

Regarding the use of social media, the American Press Institute (2015) in their survey of Millennials (those born after 1984) and their use of seven different social media platforms discover that 88% of Millennials rely on Facebook for news and continue to find new ways to use social media. Similarly, a study by Salvation and Nor Azura (2014), also show that students prefer the use of Facebook, but Junco (2014) states that some students believe, Facebook should not be present in faculty at all. Nevertheless, Burt (2010) highlights, Facebook has the potential of social networking to enhance learning.

Jonas and Collins (2016) identify students' engagement in social media and its significance for their academic performance. The study indicates that students engaged mostly in Facebook, WhatsApp, Google Plus, YouTube and Twitter. Participants use social media largely for learning, socializing, and

entertainment. The majority of students agree that social media influence their academic performance positively. In another study, Ye, Toshimori and Horita, (2017) investigate the causal relationships between the social media use of college students in Japan and their Internet literacy, addressing the effects of social skills and gender differences. They examine guidance methods that involve the relationship between social media and social skills in information education. Besides the significant benefits of using social media, there have also been problems, including cyber bullying and Internet dependency.

On the other hand, Nuttakritta (2015) reports on the effects of using social media on Thai EFL students' willingness to communicate in English. They use Instagram to post pictures of what they did in class and to reflect on their learning experience in English. The findings reveal that participants' involvement was greater when using social media, compared with their involvement during class time. These findings were confirmed in a follow-up study with the same participants, indicating that social media had a significantly positive impact on learners' achievement. The potential of social media in encouraging English communication and willingness to use the language to communicate ideas, feelings, and opinions, is highlighted in this study.

Neier and Zayer (2015) research on the undergraduate student use of five networking sites and conclude that Twitter has limited use as a classroom tool. They also discover that Millennial students are as cautious as their instructors about the use of social media in the classroom. Several studies conclude that Twitter disrupts lectures and does not encourage discussions or reflective thinking (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Jacquemin, Smelser, & Bernot, (2014) but, conversely, other studies have reported positive reasons for social media implementation for education. For instance, Twitter would be more inclusive and would encourage less-privileged students to engage in academic exchanges (Charleson & Lyal (2014), well-suited for professional development especially for teachers who lacked face-to-face contact with peers (Carpenter & Krutka (2014). Moreover Lederer (2012) states, many social media platforms provide the means for deeper explorations of subject material as well as more robust discussions outside the classroom.

In addition, Yeboah and Horsu (2015) survey on the familiarity and usage of social media among teachers. Results indicate, majority of the teachers are familiar with social media technology and are using one or more of these social media sites. The social media platforms which are most frequently used are, Facebook followed by YouTube. They use the sites for several purposes including personal and professional development. However, over 76% of the teachers do not utilise the social media for instructional purposes in the classroom. This means, students do not really benefit from the use of the social media by their teachers. However, few of the teachers occasionally share academic and useful information with their students through social media. Some of the reasons given for not using the social media tools for instructional purpose include, fear of privacy violation, not part of the curriculum, cyber abuse, infrastructural problems and distraction of students' studies. In this respect, Chen and Bryer (2012) and Hurt et al. (2012) highlight the need for educators to recognize the potential for distractions and overstimulation that is associated with certain types of social media.

Salvation and Nor Azura (2014), analyze the impact of social media on students' academic performance in Malaysia. Using a conceptual approach, they conclude that more students prefer the use of Facebook and Twitter in academic related discussions in complementing conventional classroom teaching and learning process. Students are able to formulate group discussions to exchange ideas and communicate with their teachers and friends about assignments on social media. Through social media, teachers share course-related materials with their students and create student groups to collaborate on projects and communicate with their fellow lecturers from other universities, thus facilitating teaching and learning process and the enhancement of academic performance. The discussion from their study however does not represent the general sampling of Malaysian university students.

According to Junco (2014), effective learning and motivation of students have been shown to increase through educators' use of social media. On the other hand, Mingles, Adam and Adjei (2016) analyze social media usage and academic performance in public and private senior high schools, the relation between private and public schools in relation to social media use and academic performance.

The study revealed that majority of respondents from the private schools used Whatsapp and Facebook more often and spent more hours online, thus, a higher proportion of them experienced drop in grades as compared to their counterparts in the public schools. In this respect, findings by Ye, Toshimori & Horita, (2017) are beneficial to examine guidance methods that involve the relationship between social media and social skills in information education.

Another study which highlights lecturers' effort in making use of social media in education is done by Coleman, Petitt, and Buning (2018). They explore whether lecturers, researchers, administrators and clinicians at a university perceive any change in student attitude or performance, in addition to advantages and disadvantages of social media use. Their findings confirm that, university members, especially researchers and clinicians, are slow to adopt social media for use in the workplace compared to lecturers and administrators who are more active incorporating social media into their practices. Another positive result is, students' satisfaction and attitudes had slightly improved through the use of social media.

Methodology

This study used the survey method (Frankel & Wallen (2002); Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), by obtaining answers from teacher trainees using a set of carefully designed questionnaire which was administered to collect data quantitatively. Besides employing the questionnaire method, ten students were interviewed to validate the findings from the quantitative method. Data analysis techniques employ the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (1992), which involve data reduction, data presentation, making verification and drawing conclusions.

Participants were 401 teacher trainees of the Bachelor's Degree in Education Programme. They were selected through convenience sampling. The questionnaire instrument consisted of 12 items on the use of social media for education. Questions for interviews were formulated based on the questionnaire and responses. For analysis of the questionnaire, the level of agreement as in Table 1 is used to uncover the perception of teacher trainees about the use of social media for education. They were asked to tick strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree to the 12 items used in the questionnaire instrument.

Table 1
Level of Agreement in the Use of Social Media

No.	Range of Mean	Agreement Level
1.	0.00 – 1.88	Strongly Disagreed
2.	1.89 – 2.60	Disagreed
3.	2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Agreed
4.	3.40 – 4.20	Agreed
5.	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agreed

Findings and Discussions

Demographic findings are displayed in the form of Table 2 to Table 4.

Table 2 shows the demographic information on gender. The number of female participants is 260 (64.84%), and male participants is 141(35.16%). The result is an indication that the ratio of female students in the institute in terms of numbers is higher than that of males.

Table 2
Gender of Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	260	64.84
Male	141	35.16
Total	401	100.00

Research Question 1: Which types of social media that teacher trainees frequently use?

Table 3 displays the types of social media that teacher trainees frequently used. The results show that teacher trainees frequently used WhatsApp, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Twitter and Telegram. It is further shown that the three most frequently used social media are, WhatsApp, Facebook and Google+. 399 participants use WhatsApp, indicating that two participants did not use WhatsApp, followed by Facebook which was 397, which means, four participants did not use Facebook, Google Plus was 392, which shows nine participants did not use Google+, Instagram was 390, revealing 11 participants did not use Instagram, Twitter was 389, implying that 12 participants did not use Twitter and Telegram was 387, highlighting the fact that 14 participants did not use Telegram. This result is slightly different from the findings of Yeboah and Horsu (2015) which indicates that the most popular social media site which students emerged in was the Facebook.

Table 3
Frequently-Used Social Media

Social Media	Frequency
Whatsapp	399
Facebook	397
Google Plus	392
Instagram	390
Twitter	389
Telegram	387

This finding is in line with the findings by Nishikawa et al. (2013) and Salvation and Nor Azura (2014), The American Press Institute (2015), and Joseph, Jonas and Collins (2016) that students frequented these networks. This implies that WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Twitter and Telegram can be adopted by lecturers to facilitate teaching and learning as most of the teacher trainees use these platforms.

Research question 2: What is the perception of teacher trainees on the use of social media for education?

Table 4 displays the perception of teacher trainees on the use of social media for education based on mean and the level of agreement.

Table 4
Use of social media for education

No.	Response :- I use social media to :	Mean	Agreement
1.	increase my study skills	4.95	Strongly Agreed
2.	facilitate teaching and learning process	4.31	Strongly Agreed
3.	save time to get references on any subjects	4.45	Strongly Agreed
4.	search for related information on subject matter	3.96	Agreed
5.	study with excitement to avoid boredom	4.13	Agreed
6.	make my work easier since it can be used everywhere	4.51	Strongly Agreed
7.	discuss with friends to complete any given assignments	4.51	Strongly Agreed
8.	consult lecturers to clear doubts about the assignments	4.29	Strongly Agreed
9.	discuss with lecturers pertaining to subjects taught in class	4.29	Strongly Agreed
10.	go on-line to continue discussion with lecturers	4.45	Strongly Agreed
11.	benefit from the various applications according to my study needs	4.20	Agreed
12.	discuss contents on-line with friends to prepare for group presentation	4.20	Agreed

The majority of the participants strongly agreed that social media increase their study skills, facilitate teaching and learning process, save time to get references on any subjects, make their work

easier since it can be used everywhere, discuss with friends to complete any given assignments, consult lecturers to clear doubts about the assignments, discuss with lecturers pertaining to subjects taught in class and go on-line to continue discussion with lecturers. This finding is similar to that of Coleman, Petitt, and Buning (2018), which means, teacher trainees and lecturers are active using social. Nuttakritta (2015) also highlights the positive effects of using social media. These positive effects make it easier for lecturers in the Institute of Teacher Education to channel teaching and learning through any suitable social media.

However, referring to Table 4, the teacher trainees only agreed that they used social media to search for related information on subject matter, study with excitement to avoid boredom, benefit from the various applications according to their study needs and discuss contents on-line with friends to prepare for group presentation. These findings concur with Yeboah and Horsu (2015) that, teachers do not utilise the social media for instructional purposes in the classroom. This means, teacher trainees do not receive optimal benefit from the use of the social media for education by their lecturers.

Besides answering the questionnaire items, ten participants were interviewed to validate the findings from quantitative method. Participants were P1 (Participant 1) to P10 (Participant 10).

Their responses on the use of social media for education are as follows:

P1: I use social media to interact with my lecturers and classmates in completing the assignments given. It facilitates two-way communication with lecturers and discussion with group members. Lecturers too can immediately inform students to be prepared for the next quiz.

P2: Through social media, it is easy to download tutorials and notes. Due to its widespread features, I can conveniently use social media to send information and deliver messages even in remote areas. However, assignments are neglected when using social media for too long. Students need to be reminded from time to time to restrict themselves from using social media for too long.

P3: Social media is extremely useful because discussions among friends are often done in whatsapp, facebook, twitter and so on. But, sometimes it is less satisfactory using social media because of abusive language and indecent pictures being uploaded there.

P4: I use social media in this campus more for communication with friends and also lecturers as well as increasing my study skills such as looking for notes and so on. It's easy to discuss with friends on the specific time to meet for group work but there are also weaknesses in using social media for instance, when having on-line discussion because face-to-face discussion is better.

P5: Collaborative learning among colleagues is very high because the lecture notes are shared in social media easily and quickly as in whatsapp, telegram, facebook and so on. We also use whatsapp to reply messages while lectures are going on. This is of course not good. It's better if lecturers can remind students not to look at their phones during teaching and learning sessions.

P6: It is very good to be able to use social media to discuss assignments given by lecturers. Presenting information through whatsapp is the best, easy and information is delivered very fast.

P7: I'm very active on social media especially whatsapp and I used to talk with friends and consult lecturers regarding assignments. I can also share the content of my presentation before I present in class when it's my turn to present. By doing so, it is easy for my friends to ask questions during or after my presentation.

P8: Social media is widely used by my friends and I. We used to discuss coursework given at the beginning of the semester and if we have doubts we can easily ask our lecturers through whatsapp, facebook or even telegram. I really like using social media. It facilitates discussions with lecturers and colleagues anywhere I like.

P9: The use of social media helps me as a student, to contact my classmates and lecturers to discuss important issues on our subjects and information can be delivered quickly among us even though we are not in our classrooms.

P10: Easy to discuss assignments with friends inside and outside campus. I can also contact my lecturers and discuss with ease any problems faced when revising my lessons. On-line interaction really facilitates learning and solves my problems.

The responses from quantitative and qualitative findings show that the students already know how to use social media platforms for various activities. Learning and group discussions are some of the major activities students engage in social media networks which is an indication that students like engaging in social networks. It also implies, students agree that using social media for educational purposes can be beneficial to them. Although these findings is divergent to the findings of Schill (2011) and Wang et al. (2011) that many students spend countless hours immersed in social media and it is a waste of time but support the assertion that social media can aid in the achievement of both general and content specific student learning outcomes (Junco, 2012). In addition, in order for lecturers to assist teacher trainees, the findings by Ye, Toshimori & Horita, (2017) are beneficial to examine guidance methods that involve the relationship between social media and social skills in information education. Therefore, overall learning can be increased when lecturers incorporate social media into academic course content.

Recommendations

As the internet has been rapidly utilized worldwide and the nation is accelerating to the creation of information society, teacher trainees should continue to be engaged in social media as a medium for teaching and learning. Since the majority of the teacher trainees perceive social media as good for education, it will be easier for them to accept social networks that support teaching and learning, and can minimize any negative influence that the use of social media have on their studies. Teacher trainees should be encouraged to use social media with caution, and in a positive manner as over indulgence in the use of it can lead to addiction, waste of time and worse of all adverse academic performance. The desire of stakeholders in education is that social networks should be used responsibly by students. Responsible usage means that social media should not impede students' academic performance but rather, should improve it. Strict enforcement of rules should be imposed and counselling be given to any addicted teacher trainees. Hence, there is a need for a proper direction and control of social media use in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning.

Since social media have come to stay especially with our young generation, teaching and learning activities through social media need to be well designed and coordinated to meet the contemporary teaching and learning standards. Thus, it is imperative that lecturers and academic institutions use social media in promoting academic excellence. It is also recommended that lecturers make use of new social media applications and new devices should be integrated into teaching. Therefore, in order to enhance the use of the social media to facilitate teaching and learning, there should be more infrastructural development in Information technology and more education to allay the fear or the negative thoughts on the mind of educators and learners about the use of social media. Consequently, when teacher trainees start to teach in schools it is necessary to consider how to increase the Internet literacy of pupils and help them acquire the skills they need to solve any problems that can arise.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are able to present important information regarding the types of social media teacher trainees frequently use and their perception on its use for education. The results indicate that teacher trainees engaged in a variety of social media and have a very positive perception on the use of it for education. They are able to interact effectively with lecturers and peers in on-line group discussions but social media has yet to be integrated for the betterment of

their education. The implication is, lecturers can use these findings to engage in social media that is frequently used by teacher trainees to get in touch with them in order to channel teaching and learning towards the improvement of the academic performance of teacher trainees.

Further research on the impact of social media on academic performance needs to be done. Researchers who wish to embark on social media research need to build on this finding, specifically addressing the use of social media in particular courses or subjects. It is recommended that more extensive studies be conducted using different designs such that the findings can be generalized to the entire population of teacher trainees in Malaysia as there is evidence that social media enhances student learning. The gap between social media and the lack of research to support learning indicates that researchers should consider researching on how students and lecturers can be encouraged to use social media to interact with one another and how to infuse interesting learning activities using sound pedagogical practices through social media.

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