THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AS TEACHING TOOLS

[1]Catherine R. Alimboyong and [1]Mardie E. Bucjan

Abstract

   Education is at its best when students feel connected to the learning environment and are engaged in learning that is meaningful and relevant to their lives. This standard of excellence can be met in both traditional and non-traditional academic environments using social media. The study assessed the level of acceptability and general satisfaction on the common forms of social media used in the classroom, features of social media to improve student learning outcomes, the three types of interaction: learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner which are important components in online instruction. Descriptive method of research was used to 187 students and 6 instructors as respondents of the study. Result showed that both instructors and students fully accepted and were fully satisfied on the use of social media platforms particularly facebook as teaching tools. The features of social media were found to facilitate learner-content, learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions which in return motivated students to understand lessons and learning activities meaningfully and enjoyably.

Keywords: *social media platforms, teaching tool, classroom instruction*

1.0 Introduction

   In today's social space, social media is undoubtedly one of the most powerful origins of information, news, and constant updates aided by platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Wikis, Pinterest among others. It has even affected educational settings because it is an interactive and strong means to exchange information and instruction, offering various possibilities for learner interaction that can be interpersonal, including group chatting among learners in an online class. The study assessed the level of acceptability on the common forms of social media used in the classroom, features of social media to improve student learning outcomes, the three types of interaction: learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner which are important components in online instruction. It further determined the learners and instructors' general satisfaction on the use of social media in the classroom.

   Various educational researches were conducted to assess the advantages of social media in education. Casey and Evans (2011), emphasizes that social media platforms enable students to develop content and interact with one another and allow them to build a sense of community. Mason (2008) describes some positive qualities of social media use in the classroom. He pointed out that using social media in the classroom allows the teacher not only to incorporate multimedia and multimodal texts but also to share these quickly and easily, providing a collaborative learning environment where students can communicate at any time. Other benefits of the collaborative learning that are stimulated by social media are motivation,

greater achievement, and positive social outcomes as reported by (Jones & Jo, 1999; Snowman, McCown & Biehler, 2009).

The emergence of new web 2.0 technologies pushes educators to understanding and leveraging these technologies for classroom use; at the same time, the on-the-ground implementation of these technologies in the classroom can directly impact how these technologies continue to take shape. It is in this study that the students and instructors level of acceptability on the use of social media for classroom instruction and how it effectively captures the attention of the students were observed and analyzed. Moreover, this is a kind of learning experience from the traditional classroom to a more techie environment in order to cope with the demands of this technologically advanced world.

Assessing the use of social media in classroom instruction is significant for many reasons: (1) it provides students and teachers insights on the advantages and challenges in the use of these technologies in education; (2) it aids instructional developer to come up with effective techie pedagogical tools suitable to modern learners; and (3) it provides future researchers clearer views regarding the benefits social media may bring in educative process in general.

2.0 Research Design and Methods

This study used descriptive research design. To evaluate the level of acceptability and satisfaction of the learners and instructors in the use of social media in classroom instruction. standardized questionnaire was administered to 187 student-respondents from three different classes of Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (CS) students of Surigao del Sur State University (SDSSU) Main Campus at the end of the teaching sessions. Six (6) Computer Science Instructors were also considered as respondents of the study to determine what forms of social media they incorporated in the classroom.

Prior to the conduct of the study, instructors handling Computer Science program were encouraged to use various social media platforms in instruction. Data were tallied and statistically treated utilizing simple weighted mean.

3.0 Results and Discussions

The emergence of technologies pushes instructors to understanding and leveraging these technologies for classroom use. This means there is a need to develop competencies in emerging technological teaching tools and to keep experienced instructors up to date with new educational approaches (Barksdale et al., 2011). At the same time can directly impact how these technologies continue to take shape.

Table 1 presents the level of acceptability of instructors on the common forms of social media used in classroom instruction. The table shows that the use of social media in instruction is fully accepted by the instructors. This suggests that they have positive attitude on this teaching tool in making learning an exciting and meaningful experience.

Social media as a teaching tool has a natural collaborative element. Students can critique and comment on each other's assignment, work in teams to create content, and can easily access each other and the teachers with questions or to start a discussion. It provides a platform to encourage participation beyond the classroom and engage students in dialogue with more peers (Social Media as a Teaching Tool, 2014).

Table 1. Level of acceptability on the common forms of social media as a teaching tool

Social Media Platforms	Weighted Mean	Description
Internet Forums/Chats	3.83	Fully Acceptable
Blogs/Weblogs	3.83	Fully Acceptable
Facebook	4.00	Fully Acceptable
Twitter	3.33	Fully Acceptable
Google+	3.33	Fully Acceptable
Wikis	3.50	Fully Acceptable
Youtube	3.50	Fully Acceptable
Over-all Mean	***3.61***	***Fully Acceptable***

Legend: 3.26—4.0 - Fully Acceptable   1.76—2.51 - Can't Say
2.51—3.25 - Partially Acceptable   1.0—1.75 – Fully Acceptable

Among all forms of social media, instructors favored more the use of facebook because it is the most prevalent among the social media platforms. Facebook has been described as one of the most popular social networking sites (Mazer, Murphy & Simmonds, 2009). As a teaching tool, facebook can create discussion in the classroom where teachers can pull new stories from any other sources allowing students to ask questions and facilitate deeper discussion after reading something no one of the thousands of SM sites.

It is in this manner that the instructors can share or post their lessons to their students while they are out from the classroom and for those students who are absent in the class can still access and review the material.

Table 2 illustrates the level of acceptability on the social media features rated by the instructors.

Table 2. Level of acceptability on the social media features

Indicators Social Media Features enable students to:	Weighted Mean	Description
Access the course/lessons anytime	3.16	Fully Acceptable
Proceeds at own pace	3.50	Fully Acceptable
Select the lesson content to be learned	3.16	Fully Acceptable
Share, collaborate, discuss with peers, post responses	3.33	Partially Acceptable
Allow to search for information across different social media forms	3.33	Fully Acceptable
Over-all Mean	**3.29**	***Fully Acceptable***

Legend: 3.26—4.0 - Fully Acceptable   1.76—2.51 - Can't Say
2.51—3.25 - Partially Acceptable   1.0—1.75 - Not Acceptable

Instructor- respondents believed that the features of social media particularly the content of the lessons embedded in each class is fully acceptable. Interestingly, these features of instruction would be beneficial if instructors consistently use some of the social media applications allowing students to access, share, collaborate, and search information on a regular basis. Additionally, student-respondents also believed that

instructors should have a regular presence in class discussion and make an attempt to provide a virtual presence similar to their literal presence in face-to-face classes.

Table 3 presents the level of acceptability of learning-content interaction on the use of social media in instruction as rated by the student-respondents.

Table 3. Level of acceptability of social media platforms as to learner – content interaction

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
The lessons or lectures notes and modules posted facilitated my learning	3.76	Fully Acceptable
The websites introduced/given facilitated my learning	3.63	Fully Acceptable
The assignments and/or projects posted on the websites/blogs facilitated my learning	3.67	Fully Acceptable
Posted quizzes/exams/assignments facilitated my learning	3.63	Fully Acceptable
The learning activities given on identified blogs/websites required application of problem solving skills which facilitated my learning.	3.81	Fully Acceptable
I feel that class e-mails, chats and internet forums experience has helped improve my written communication skills	3.67	Fully Acceptable
The activities or assignments posted (facebook, blogs, youtube, web and etc.) required critical thinking which facilitated my learning	3.75	Fully Acceptable
Over-all Mean	***3.70***	***Fully Acceptable***

Legend: 3.26—4.0 - Fully Acceptable   1.76—2.51 - Can't Say
         2.51—3.25 - Partially Acceptable   1.0—1.75   - Not Acceptable

The learner-content interaction is described as fully acceptable. This implies that the use of social media platforms in classroom instruction facilitates students' learning. This means to say that the student-respondents are able to access the content of each lesson as more interactive where they can easily interrelate and understand them; assignments and activities are enjoyable with the use of social media platforms. Further, these features can even facilitate student engagement. *Learner-content interaction*: high-quality content was identified as the most important variable for a satisfying learning experience. Therefore, adequate faculty support is needed in developing high-quality content (Ahn, 2012).

Table 4 shows the level of acceptability of learner- instructor interaction on the use of social media in instruction as rated by the student-respondents.

Table 4. Level of acceptability of social media platforms as to learner– instructor interaction

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
The instructor is an active member of the blogs, weblogs, facebook, google, twitter and youtube.	3.27	Fully Acceptable
I received timely feedback (within 24-48 hours) from my instructor	3.32	Fully Acceptable
I felt frustrated by the lack of feedback from my instructor	3.23	Partially Acceptable
I was able to get individualized attention from my instructor, when needed.	3.31	Fully Acceptable
The instructor functioned as the facilitator of the course by continuously encouraging the use of different social media forms	3.67	Fully Acceptable
Although I could not see the instructor in this class, I felt his/ her presence.	3.62	Fully Acceptable
Over-all Mean	*3.40*	*Fully Acceptable*

Legend: 3.26—4.0 - Fully Acceptable   1.76—2.51 - Can't Say
         2.51—3.25 - Partially Acceptable   1.0—1.75 - Not Acceptable

Likewise, the learner–instructor interaction is described as fully acceptable. This means that social media platforms provide a good avenue for active learning interaction between learners and instructor. Through social media learners find it convenient to get feedback and attend to all the activities posted by the teacher, teacher should maintain frequent and timely online contact with students to provide feedbacks on assignment and other activities. *Learner –Instructor Interaction:* Faculty should have ongoing communication with all online students in the course. Inactive students should be contacted to determine why they are not engaged in the course (Ahn, 2012).

Table 5 shows the level of acceptability of learner- learner interaction on the use of social media in instruction as rated by the student-respondents.

The tabular values show that learner-learner interaction is found to be fully acceptable. This suggests students believe that social media as teaching tool enables them to communicate with each other, in pairs or groups, with or without the presence of instructor. Social media supports learner-learner interaction through building of collaborative group projects, sharing personal experiences, entire class discussions, and exchanging resources (Shackelford & Maxwell, 2012). *Learner-learner Interaction*: Appropriate interaction should be provided to facilitate communications among students. This communication can be provided by means of e-mail, telephone, discussion board, online chats, or the use of smart-phone connection systems. Students might be required to have mandatory face-to-face meetings within their online course. The use of discussion groups

Table 5. Level of acceptability of social media platforms as to learner- learner interaction

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
I feel that chats, emails, forums and the like provides opportunity for problem solving with other students.	3.57	Fully Acceptable
I feel that chats, emails, forums and the like provides opportunity for critical thinking with other students.	3.50	Fully Acceptable
The use of facebook, blogs, microblogs, youtube and the other forms of social media in the class was a waste of time.	2.58	Cant' Say
The use of facebook, blogs, microblogs, youtube and the other forms of social media in the class created a sense of community among students.	3.48	Fully Acceptable
Using the different forms of social media in the class provide opportunity to ask for clarification from a fellow student when needed.	3.79	Fully Acceptable
I received timely feedback on this type of technology embedded (social media) instruction.	3.64	Fully Acceptable
This technology embedded (social media usage) instruction encouraged students to discuss ideas and concepts covered with other students	3.64	Fully Acceptable
Most difficulties I encounter when using computers, I can deal with	2.87	Partially Acceptable
I find working with computers very easy	3.63	Fully Acceptable
I enjoy working with computers and it makes me more productive	4.00	Fully Acceptable
I am very confident in my abilities to use computers	3.77	Fully Acceptable
Using computers makes learning more interesting	3.94	Fully Acceptable
Some of the posted activities, quizzes, and assignments definitely make learning easier	3.86	Fully Acceptable
Computers are a good aid to learning	3.87	Fully Acceptable
I consider myself a skilled computer user	3.64	Fully Acceptable
Over-all Mean	*3.58*	***Fully Acceptable***

Legend: 3.26—4.0 - Fully Acceptable   1.76—2.51 - Can't Say
         2.51—3.25 - Partially Acceptable   1.0—1.75 - Not Acceptable

might improve problem solving, critical thinking, and self-expression among students (Ahn, 2012).

Table 6 describes the satisfaction of instructors and students on the use of social media platforms as teaching tools.

Table 6. Instructors and students' general satisfaction on the use of social media platforms

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description
I am very satisfied with the use of different forms of social media for instruction	4.00	Fully Satisfied
I would like to acquire another tool enhance my classroom instruction	4.00	Fully Satisfied
This type of instruction did not meet my learning needs due to inadequate number of computers available	3.16	Fully Satisfied
I would recommend this method of teaching to others	4.00	Fully Satisfied
I learned as much in this techie instruction as compared to a traditional classroom instruction	3.66	Fully Satisfied
I feel that this online instruction method is as effective as the traditional classroom instruction	3.66	Fully Satisfied
Over-all Mean	*3.91*	*Fully Satisfied*

Legend: 3.26—4.0 - Fully Satisfied   1.76—2.51 - Can't Say
2.51—3.25 - Partially Satisfied   1.0—1.75 - Not Satisfied

Data reveal that students and instructors are fully satisfied on the use of social media platforms as teaching tools. This implies that the practicality and convenience of using the different social media as means of instruction is commendable. Social media in most of its forms has started to transform the way in which the instructors teaching, students learning, educational managers lead learning and continue doing so because of a mix of the functional utilization of social media by college students and also the need for institutions of greater education to satisfy students and instructors (Al-Rhami & Othman, 2013). Using social media further seems to be associated with greater amount of inspiration, affective learning, along with a better class atmosphere (Kaya, 2010).

4.0 Conclusion

Instructors and students have positive regards on the use of social media platforms particularly facebook as teaching tools because of its familiarity, popularity and comfort level. The features of social media facilitated learner-content, learner-instructor and learner-learner interactions which in return motivated students to understand lessons and learning activities meaningfully and enjoyably. The study opens the possibility for a potential changing of faculty perceptions in developing and

delivering online instruction in the future. Therefore, the transference of designing course instruction from traditional to the online environment should be very easy for faculty.

References

Ahn, B. (2012). *General satisfaction of students in 100% online courses in the department of learning technologies at the University of North Texas*. Denton, Texas. University of North Texas Digital Library. Accessed in http://digital library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc 115042/ on October 15, 2012.

Al-Rhami, W.M. & Othman, M. S. (2013). Evaluating students' satisfaction of using social media through collaborative learning in higher education. *International Journal of Advances in Engineering & Technology, 6 (4), 1541-1551.*

Barksdale, D. J., Woodley, L., Page, J. B., Bernhardt, J., Kowlowitz, V. & Oermann, M. H. (2011). Instructors development: doing more with less. *The Journal of Continuing Education Nursing, 42(12),537- 544.*

Casey, G. & Evans, T. (2011). Designing for learning: Online social networks as a distance learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 12(7), 1-26.*

Jones, V. & Jo, J.H. (1999). *The Evaluation of student performance and perception in web-based instruction in regard to age and gender*. Paper presented at the 16th Annual Conference of the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE), Brisbane.

Kaya, T. (2010, September 29). CUNY Social network mixes scholarship with facebook-style friendship. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Washington. D.C. Accessed in http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/cuny-social-network-mixes-scholarship-with-facebook-style-friendship/27266 on October 15, 2013.

Mason, R. (2008). *E-learning and social networking handbook: Resources* for higher education. New York: Routledge.

Mazer, J., Murphy, R. & Simmonds, C. (2009). The effects of teacher self-disclosure via facebook on teacher credibility. *Learning, Media and Technology, 34*(2), 175-183.doi: 10.1080/17439880902923655

Shackelford, Jo L., Maxwell, M. (2012). Sense of community in graduate online education. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning. 13 (4) , 228-248.*

Snowman, J., McCown, R. & Biehler, R. (2009). *Psychology applied to teaching*. 12th ed. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Social Media as a Teaching Tool. (2014). Accessed from http://sites.psu.edu/snailonline/2014/03/30/social-media-as-a-teaching-tool/on September, 2014.