

Teachers' perspectives on social media in schools in the UAE

Mohamad Ezzat Alkutich

PhD Student, Faculty of Education, The British University in Dubai

Abstract

Social media plays a fundamental role worldwide in changing the way of communication is carried out. Using social media in schools has its pros and cons. This paper aims explores the perspectives of teachers in Abu Dhabi schools regarding the use of social media for instructional purposes in the classroom. The study investigated recent experience of teachers with social media in schools, as well as explore teachers' point of view regarding the importance of social media in teaching and learning. Finding shows that teachers consider social media is a significant tool in their day-to-day school communication, and there was an appreciation for the use of social media in teaching and learning. Moreover, teachers depicted that the implementation of social media in teaching and learning is still an elusive target.

Key Words: Teachers, social media, School education, Teaching and Learning, The UAE

Introduction

The paradigm shift in education in the 21st century is marked by the use of internet and technology, and most recently, we started to experience a new lingo on new classroom approach by many tools of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Google education, etc. Social media is identified as methods of online communication to share ideas and information (Boyd & Ellison, 2010). This study aims to explore teacher views in Abu Dhabi schools about social media and its pros and cons on teaching and learning. The literature presents the use of social media in education in its both sides. Many studies illustrated the advantages of social media in education. Walsh in his study (2011) claimed that social media is advertised to bring betterment to teaching and learning, Such as student's involvement and collaborative learning. Another study found that principals encourage

teachers to use social media to keep educational stakeholders informed (Ferriter & Ramsden, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, another research says that social media makes schools connected and significant for students (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009).

One of the key roles of education is to prepare students to sharpen their 21st-century skills to fit the environments of the workplace by enhancing skills such as creating, analyzing, critical thinking, problem solving and innovation. Thus effective communication in the workplace between workers and other stakeholders require schools to improve students' digital skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2002). Moreover, students converted from being passive observers of social media to active collaborators and users who share, discuss, plan and build the knowledge (Bull & Adams, 2012; Mao, 2014; Peters & Hopkins, 2013). However other studies, on the other hand, presented the disadvantages of social media in education. One study found that about 50% think that social media can improve teaching and learning (K-12 Teachers, 2014). Moreover, Crane (2012) highlighted that social media increases cyberbullying. Another study claims that social media just brings more distraction to teaching and learning (Lederer, 2012). Providing the new generation of students with critical thinking and problem-solving is a significant goal worldwide (Thompson, 2011), and social media is expected to help teachers to hone these skills (Krutka & Milton, 2013; McClain, 2013). In another study, Demski (2012) found that social media has a crucial role for school technology leadership, he depicted that the elements of this type of leadership are varied, Such as establishing the atmosphere of innovation, encouraging collaborative work and setting the personal connection of students.

Bringing social media to the classroom is a challenge for educators due to various issues, such as access issues, privacy and cyberbullying. Hinduja and Patchin in their study found that about 25 % of students were victims of bullying, and about 16% had cyberbullied others. Thus, it makes schools pay more attention to students' negative behavior related to social media, and these schools tried to overcome these issues by creating policies for behavior and the usage of social media (2014). On other side, students' protection of their privacy when using social media is another challenge for schools (Whitehead, Floyd & Decker, 2013), these social media platforms try to respond to this issue by providing users with more control of privacy settings (Pacansky-Brock & Ko, 2012).

This study tries to answer these research questions;

1. What are social media platforms implemented in schools?

2. What are teacher's perspectives of using social media in the classroom?
3. What are the challenges of using social media for teaching and learning?
4. What are social media sites used in the classroom?

Literature Review

Social Capital Theory

Technology in general and social media, in particular, is a double-edged sword. It is all about the way it is utilized. Social media as well enhances social capital, which known as "resources embedded in the social structure which is accessed and mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin, 1999, p. 35). Besides, Lin (1999) appealed that social capital theory comprises three significant components. Such as the embedded resources in social networks, accessibility, and mobilization. These elements need to be used in the procedure of producing social capital.

The emerging discovery of Social media advanced the very early optimistic view of Lin (1999) on the internet of creating social capital. Social media has a crucial role in creating a developed social capital generation by online networking and platforms that facilitate the accessibility of the embedded resources (Burke, Kraut, & Marlow, 2011).

Importance of Social Media in Education

The literature comprises much research claiming that social media serves significant purposes in teaching and learning (Junco, 2011). These studies illustrate that there is a relationship between student engagement and grades when using social media applications (DeAndrea, et al., 2012). Blankenship in his study (2011) showed that social media has a positive impact on students' engagement, interest, more control of education and more responsibility for their learning. Another study found that social media has a significant role in students' academic attainment by promoting collaborative learning, and interactive with peers and teachers (Al-Rahmi, 2013).

Mahmud and other co-authors (2016) found that social media shape students' perceptions towards teachers who are active on social media. Moreover, they concluded that teachers' accessibility via social media empower teaching and learning to be less contrived by just the physical classroom settings.

Ramstad and Swenson (2017) executed a study to see how social media impact student participation in the classroom. They used two identical, hour-long workshop sessions of learning in an active learning of twelfth-grade students' classroom. They checked student understanding via various educational social media tools and software by using a pre- and post-survey. The results showed that social media plays a significant influence on student learning opportunities in classroom instruction and it maximizes student learning potential.

Hussain and others (2016) in their study investigated the learning style of students who use social media and those who do not use it. They found that social media has a positive effect on students marks and assignments.

In another study, Manca and Ranieri conducted a large national survey in Italy about the actual employment of social media. They investigated the motivation of social media in teaching and learning and its challenges. They found that social media has a limited impact for different reasons. Such as cultural, pedagogical and constraints (2016). Greenhow and Lewin (2016) proposed a new framework for social media that integrate formal and informal learning. The authors employed two different case studies together with social constructivism and connectivism.

Methodology

To answer the research questions regarding teachers' point of view on the use of social media in the classroom, the researcher applied a quantitative approach as a methodology of research by employing an online survey. This study is a quantitative research based on numeric data extracted from a questionnaire survey (Creswell, 2011)

Sample and Participants

The respondents of this survey were 43 teachers from Abu Dhabi schools, from both governmental and private schools, and from different subject areas. In Abu Dhabi as the capital Emirate of the United Arab Emirates UAE, there is a variety of students' background, such as nationalities and languages. Many schools in Abu Dhabi have embarked different technology approaches, most importantly "Bring Your Own Device" BYOD.

Research Instruments

This study as a quantitative research surveys 29 questions to answer the main research questions. The questionnaire contains two sections. The first one is about the demographic background of the participants and the second section includes the questions that are related to the research questions. This survey uses three types of question formats, such as yes or no, and Likert scaled questions ranging between 1 to 6 (1 = strongly agree and 6 = strongly disagree) and finally open-ended questions (Chang, L., 1994).

The research questions of this paper are two questions: 1) what are the advantages of using social media on teaching and learning? 2) What are the disadvantages of using social media on teaching and learning? To answer these two questions, the researchers employed four sub-questions: 1- Does your school allow social media? 2- Do you appreciate the use of social media for teaching and learning? 3- What are the barriers that face the use of social media in classroom? 4- Do you recommend the approach of BYOD, or the use of a particular device?

Procedures

After getting the approval of Abu Dhabi Educational Council to conduct this survey, an online survey sent via email to 6 private schools as an invitation to their teachers to participate in this study. The link to the survey was open for one month, and a follow-up email was sent after one week. In the end, only 51 teachers responded to the invitation and answered the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

After receiving all the participation from the 51 teachers, 8 of them were rejected due to incomplete answers, which make the total number of respondents 43 teachers. For further analysis, the researcher got to benefit from the survey website as it provides a variety of analysis, such as percentages and frequencies.

Social Media Implications

It is apparent that social media plays a significant role in fashioning social capital, however, when it is brought to the educational context, legal issues emerge. Thus, policymakers need to pay attention that social media might bring different problems to schools, such as sexual harassment

and abuse, speech freedom, and privacy (Decker, 2012). Moreover, social media and because of its perceived anonymity, encourage users to post others data, photos and videos, which can be called Cyberbullying (Junco, 2011; Lenhart, 2007).

Results

Demographic Background of Participants

As it is shown in Table 1, participants were 43 teachers from different private schools in Abu Dhabi, these teachers were 25 females and 18 males, and the age ranging was between 30-39 years old. Moreover, around 50 % of the respondents had teaching experience between 11-15 years. Even though that the teachers had a long time in this profession, however, the majority of them have been in the recent job for 1-5 years.

Table 1: Demographic Background of Respondents		
Gender	n	%
Female	25	58.13
Male	18	41.86
Age		
25-29	10	23.25
30-39	28	65.11
40-49	4	9.30
50 and above	1	2.32
Years in teaching profession		
1-5	8	18.60
6-10	10	23.25
11-15	21	48.83
16-20	3	6.97
More than 20	1	2.32
Years in the recent teaching position		
Less than 1 year	3	6.97
1-5 years	31	72.09
6-10 years	6	13.95
11-15 years	3	6.97
More than 15 years	0	0

Schools Experience with Social Media

In the second section of the questionnaire, as it is illustrated in Table 2, teachers were asked about what social media sites and applications they had experienced in their schools. The results came as the following; a vast majority of the respondents claimed that their schools allow them to use social media for both academic and dissemination purposes.

Table 2: Social media applications in Schools		
Does your school allow social media in the campus?	n	%
For teaching and learning purposes	Yes – 39	90.70
For information dissemination	No – 4	9.30
Which of the following social media application do you use for teaching and learning?		
Facebook	11	26.19
Twitter	4	9.52
Instagram	3	7.14
Pinterest	15	35.71
YouTube	31	73.81
Blogs	14	33.33
Wikis	5	11.90
Quizlet -	5	11.90
None	3	7.14
Which of these social media applications your school uses for disseminating data?		
Facebook	22	61.11
Twitter	3	8.33
Instagram	3	8.33
Pinterest	6	16.67
YouTube	11	30.56
Blogs	9	25.00
Wikis	0	0.00
None	7	19.44

However, about 30% of teachers indicated that they use social media in the classroom for instruction. On the other hand, and regarding the social media applications and sites that they used to use in the classroom, the results showed that YouTube comes in the first place with about 73 %, then Pinterest comes next with 35 %. However, Facebook came first with a vast majority when it comes to using social media for disseminating information.

Importance of Social Media

Teachers' belief about the role of social media in teaching and learning is also examined in this survey. As it is illustrated in Table 3, the findings show that a vast majority of teachers believe that social media plays a significant role in classroom activities with 52% strongly agreed and 35% agreed. Moreover, participants claimed that social media applications had increased students' overall participation in classroom activities, with 49% strongly agree and 45% agree.

Table 3: Importance of social media in teaching and learning		
	n	%
Teachers appreciation of the use of social media sites in classroom activities		
Strongly agree	7	16.67
Agree	14	33.33
Slightly agree	19	45.24
Slightly disagree	1	2.38
Disagree	0	0.00
Strongly disagree	1	2.38
Teachers' views on the impact of social media applications on the results of standardized tests		
Strongly agree	3	7.14
Agree	6	14.29
Slightly agree	26	61.90
Slightly disagree	4	9.52
Disagree	2	4.76
Strongly disagree	1	2.38
Do you encourage other teachers to use social media sites in classroom teaching activities?		
Strongly agree	10	23.81
Agree	12	28.57
Slightly agree	17	40.48
Slightly disagree	2	4.76
Disagree	1	2.38
Strongly disagree	1	2.38

Likewise, 61% of teachers believe that social media sites added more value and improvement regarding the standardized tests. However, the findings showed that there is a modest agreement

40 % from teachers regarding encouraging other teachers to implement the use of social media sites in their teaching, see Table 3.

On another side, as it is presented in Table 4, about 60% of teachers agreed that Facebook is the best tool for schools' data dissemination among other social media applications. Regarding the question of which application or site of social media they prefer to use in classroom teaching and learning, the results showed that 65% of the participants appreciate the use of YouTube, and in the second place came Pinterest. Finally, 45% of teachers agreed that their schools provided them with training and workshops on social media, see Table 4.

Table 4: Favourite social media tools in teaching and learning		
Which one of these applications and sites of social media is useful for classroom teaching activities?		
Facebook	12	28.57
Twitter	12	28.57
Instagram	10	23.81
Pinterest	20	47.62
YouTube	37	88.10
Blogs	23	54.76
Wikis	13	30.95
None	0	0.00
Did your school provide you with a CPD on the use of social media applications in classroom teaching?		
Strongly agree	10	13.81
Agree	12	20.57
Slightly agree	17	13.48
Slightly disagree	2	24.76
Disagree	1	20.38
Strongly disagree	1	9.38

Barriers to Using Social Media in Classroom

As part of the survey, teachers were asked about the barriers to using social media as instructional tools in the classroom. The findings depicted that an overall 65% of participants believe that using social media sites in the classroom would impact negatively by creating technology problems. A massive majority, as seen in Table 5, shown that using social media platforms in teaching would

face resistance from parents with 66%. Likewise, about 26% think that social media implementation in the classroom would face resistance from teachers who do not believe in technology integration for instructional purposes.

Table 5: Barriers of social media in teaching and learning		
	n	%
Do you think that including social media applications in the classroom would face technical issues?		
Strongly agree	0	0.00
Agree	8	19.05
Slightly agree	20	47.62
Slightly disagree	8	19.05
Disagree	3	7.14
Strongly disagree	3	7.14
Do you think that including social media applications in the classroom would face objections from parents?		
Strongly agree	0	0.00
Agree	7	16.67
Slightly agree	17	40.48
Slightly disagree	11	26.19
Disagree	5	11.90
Strongly disagree	2	4.76
Do you think that including social media applications in the classroom would face objections from teachers?		
Strongly agree	0	0.00
Agree	7	16.67
Slightly agree	19	45.24
Slightly disagree	9	21.43
Disagree	5	11.90
Strongly disagree	2	4.76

The Use of Technology Devises

As it is presented in Table 6, responding to the questions related the technology tools that are utilized in classrooms. The teachers showed that iPads, iPhones, iPods, and Androids are the most familiar tools of technology in the classroom as they experience with 100%, 74%, 60% and 53% consecutively. Fortunately, about 99% of participants believe that the use of Bring-Your-Own-

Devise policy is significantly helpful in integrating social media in the classroom for instructional purposes.

Table 6: Barriers of social media in teaching and learning		
	n	%
Select from the list below the devices that you and other teachers and students use in the classroom for instructional purposes. You can choose more than one.		
iPad	43	100.00
iPod	26	60.47
iPhone	32	74.42
Microsoft Tablet	7	16.28
Google Chromebook	11	25.58
Android Mobile	23	53.49
Kindle	15	34.88
None	0	0.00
Do you think that the approach of Bring Your Device help in facilitating the use of social media in the classroom for instructional purposes?		
Strongly agree	10	23.81
Agree	17	40.48
Slightly agree	14	33.33
Slightly disagree	0	0.00
Disagree	0	0.00
Strongly disagree	1	2.38

Discussion and Results

Technology and social media in this contemporary world has made a paradigm shift in humans' daily communication and socialization in general and made as well a fundamental change in education in particular. People now can gather virtual and chat wherever they are at the same time without any barriers (Boyd & Ellison, 2010, p.9). In this study, teachers acknowledged the use of social media and the change that is brought to education by technology. Also, this study found that around 35% of teachers use social media for instructional purposes. As per teachers' view, the vast

majority of them believe that the most frequently used social media applications and sites in the classroom is YouTube, then in the second place come Pinterest.

These results are linear with other previous studies. Such as the research that conducted by Tamim, (2014), in which he found that teachers use videos for their presentations and engaging students. However, the use of YouTube is not that expected goal form social media implementation in classroom instruction, as it is students are just passive watchers (McCleod, 2014). Moreover, teachers' second choice was Pinterest, by which they can get professional development with valuable resources in planning, teaching tips, strategies and class management (Cummings, 2015, p2). Nonetheless, teachers acknowledged the use of social media sites and its tools in developing the standardized tests and their scores and analysis. Moreover, teachers in this research think that social media implementation in the classroom would bring technical issues and problems, and also it would cause a resistance from other teachers who do not believe in the importance of social media for instructional purposes. Besides, social media might bring objections from parents.

Implications

In responding to these worries, school principals are required to enhance a new approach to leadership in their schools to facilitate the change (Rosenberg, 2014; Anderson & Dexter, 2005; Selvaraja & Pihie, 2015). This leadership needs to provide teachers with more and advanced professional development in the use of social media in the classroom and to explain to students and parents the importance of social media for better learning and higher outcomes (Bolkan, 2014). Finally, principals need to develop a new and smart policy of social media.

Limitations

The limitations of this piece of research are varying. Such as, it collects data from schools in Abu Dhabi only which means that it can't be generated and affect its reliability, the time of conducting the survey is recent and just one month, which means that there will be no robust validity for the collected data and results. Moreover, its methodology lacks triangulation and only relies on a quantitative survey which affects its accuracy. The sample of the study is not that large, and when we have a larger number of teachers, we will get different results.

Future Research

Based on the shortcomings of this study and the limitations mentioned above, future studies need to increase the number of participants from different geographic backgrounds to obtain valuable data that can be generalized. Moreover, more research required to collect data about the impact of social media based on the perspectives of principals, students, and parents. Besides, data and results would be stronger when they are collected from different research methodologies which build triangulation by integrating different instruments of quantitative with qualitative research methods.

Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate teachers' perspectives of the effect of bringing social media to the classroom. The majority of teachers who were employed in this survey believe that the implementation of social media in the classroom for instructional purposes play a significant role for both teachers and students in classroom teaching and learning activities. The results showed that social media has a positive impact on students interaction in classroom and help in developing the standardized test scores. Nonetheless, social media integration in classroom instructional activities still a hard goal to be achieved as it needs schools stakeholders to get more professional development to be aware of the importance of social media in the recent paradigm shift in education that we experience.

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