

THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MODERN TEACHING AND LEARNING TOOL IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

Martunis Martunis

Universitas Terbuka, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: mart.martunis@gmail.com

ABSTRACT


This paper explores the benefits of social media for assisting teaching process in higher education institution in Indonesia. The paper also looks at the ways of using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and WeChat. As the continuous growing of social platforms, most students and teachers in higher education level are now interacting through social media. The opportunities to utilize them as teaching and learning tools are endless. This paper reveals that the use of social media had positive outputs towards teaching and learning. However, social media also comes with some challenges which may limit its effectiveness. Thus, some possible solutions will be presented here in order to make the most out of social media for teaching and learning.

KEYWORDS: *Higher Education, Social Media, Teaching and Learning Tools.*

INTRODUCTION

The growth of social media has become massive in the recent years. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are some of the most popular social media used every day. Facebook is the most popular with nearly 1.9 billion active users worldwide (Chaffey, 2017). According to Oxford dictionary, social media is “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”. People are introduced to technology at an early age. Students are using social media mostly to check their friends’ news status, events, updates, photos, videos and messages. Boyd and Ellison (2007) state that social networking sites (SNSs) have been growing significantly in the latest few years.

A recent survey reported that of the 50% of internet users in the world, 37% of them are active social media users. Interestingly, the study put Indonesia in the top 10 countries with the highest popularity of social media access in the world and



considered a higher percentage of use than the US, UK, and other European countries (Chaffey, 2017). This fact can be a tremendous opportunity for Indonesian teachers, lecturers, and government to take advantage of the situation and improve the national learning quality. Social media can be integrated into the classroom, especially at universities.

In this paper, I analyze and discuss the benefits of the social media as learning tools in higher education in Indonesia. I also discuss the disadvantages that can occur in the implementation of these tools. By knowing these concerns, we will be able to formulate strategies to get the best result when applying social media as learning tools. Based on the investigation finding, I would like to argue that there are several benefits as well as concerns of the social media as the instruments in the teaching-learning process in higher education, and most of all, there are things that can be done to guarantee the maximum efficiency of social media as educational instruments. For this purpose, this paper is presented in several sections. Firstly, I start by giving the general view of social media as the introduction part. Secondly, I provide the background to the issue and the significance of my study. Then, I present some empirical studies related to the benefits and concerns of social media for teaching and learning as well as the ways to maximize the use of social media in the classroom, and lastly, I draw some conclusions of my analysis and discussion by restating the consideration of implementing the social media for teaching and learning.

THE BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INVESTIGATION

It is inevitable especially for youth all over the world to be engaged with social media and other digital technologies nowadays. Not only do students use the social media, but many have developed an addiction to these media more than anything (Allam & Elvas, 2016; Selwyn, 2016). They use social media primarily for social purposes such as checking friends' status and location update, sharing information, and messaging. Different platforms of social media are used in the various countries; for instance, students in America use Twitter and Facebook, whereas people in China use WeChat or Renren (Selwyn, 2012).

With the rapid development and engagement of technology, universities and their academics are pushed to increase their skills and knowledge towards this social media life. In higher education, many developed countries have successfully integrated social media in the education system. Developing countries are also progressing the same way in the different pace. In Indonesia, educators are now encouraged to implement technology in the classroom, as cited in the national education curriculum of 2013 by Indonesia Ministry of Education (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan


Republik Indonesia, 2013). Many researchers have demonstrated that social media can enhance students' social life by sharing information and organizing their study needs (Balakrishnan, Teoh, Pourshafie & Liew, 2017; Evans, 2014; Henderson, Selwyn, & Aston, 2015). A study by Eid and Al-Jabri (2016) also supports a similar idea saying that the use of social media for online discussion, chatting and content sharing has "positively affected knowledge sharing among students and improved their learning" (p. 25). However, a study of 445 students at a state university in Minnesota by Tham and Ahmed (2011) showed that social media usage outside the classroom did not have effects on their academic performance because of lack of control and focus toward study content.

On the one hand, social media use could drive students' attention away from study purpose. On the other hand, digital technology, in this case, social media, has many potentials to help students gain better and faster understanding in their learning. Social media also offers collaboration and better correspondence between students and students, and students with teachers.

This paper aims to provide a better understanding for university lecturers, academics, educators and researchers, especially in Indonesia, about the tremendous potentials of technology to be used for teaching and learning purposes. Moreover, by knowing the disadvantages of social media as educational tools, education practitioners will be much aware and better prepared to tackle and anticipate them so that better teaching and learning activities will happen in the classroom.

THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Numerous studies have reported the positive outputs of the utilization of social media in the classroom. One of the advantages is to stimulate active learning. Lumby, Anderson and Hugman (2014) mention that social media "opens up the new possibility of engaging students in their own active learning" (p. 129). The same idea is also expressed by Junco, Heiberger & Loken (2011) who argue that when a teacher is able to connect students' personal experiences with the learning material, he/she can increase students' self-active learning to achieve learning goal and provide chances to become independent in their study. Active learning here means that students will eagerly engage with learning material posted via social media, participate more in the forum discussion, and also work together with their friends in the classroom. The research of 125 first semester students in the health professional faculty found that students actively participated in many educational activities when the study materials were posted on the Ning social network (Brady, Holcomb & Smith, 2010). In addition, a study by Cooke (2017) found that students were noticeably confident to participate



in class discussion and debates. This way, students could take responsibility for their own learning and how they wanted to learn the subject. By having good social connections among students, positive collaboration would be developed (Burbules, 2016). Faizi, Afia and Chibeb (2013) add that social media applications allow students to work together to achieve a common goal and needs.

Another advantage of social media is that it offers flexibility in terms of time and place of study for both teachers and students (Henderson et al., 2015; Jankauskaite, 2015; Selwyn, 2012). The space for learning is not going to be a big issue anymore since learning material can be posted online and every student can see them, ask questions, even discuss with friends, which will improve students learning experience (Liu, 2010). Social media also has a real impact on the student's life when it comes to organizing their social life and working on their study needs (Balaskrenan et al., 2017; Evans, 2014). A study by Henderson et al. (2015, p. 4) which involved 1658 undergraduate students from two different universities in Australia found below findings:

"The most frequently raised set of benefits centred on the role of digital technology in organising and managing the logistics of studying (46.9% of respondents). This was described in broad terms of 'keeping on track' and 'keep[ing] up to date'. Often these benefits related to assessment deadlines and other course requirements. Students described their universities' digital systems as keeping them 'organized', 'regulate[d]', 'manage[d]', and 'focalized'" (p. 4).

My observation and experience studying at Monash University have been also self-evident to the advantages of using digital technology in learning. As the pressure of assignment deadline, individual and group work projects, seminars, and social life intensifies, many students would quickly forget small things. Nevertheless, they would find it very helpful when there are reminders that are set in the social media.

Next, in classrooms, there are many students with many different personalities. Some of them are rather reserved and shy to express their ideas and interact with friends. Social media tools can help in a way that they promote and encourage student engagement, including those with the confidence issue (Crabil, Youngquist & Cayanus, 2012; Sobaih, Moustafa, Ghanforoush & Khan, 2016). As reported by a study in the USA by Rankin (2009) who experimented the use of social media as learning tools in the University of Texas, there was a significant increase in the participation of students who were usually not engaged in the classroom. Another study also suggested that when students were discouraged and tedious during the lesson, social networking sites would be the perfect alternative to express their ideas and creativity about the lesson (Faizi et al., 2013; Moskaliuk, Kimmerle & Cress, 2009). Initially, social media is used as

means to express their thought through reading writing, but later, it often creates the autonomous habit of reading and writing for students (Faizi et al., 2013).


Social media use also encourages a real-time process of sharing and adding content (Burbules, 2016) and is useful for direct communication to get easy access to teachers in an “informal and less pressure online environment” (Manca & Ranieri, 2017, p. 610). It encourages immediate feedback from classmates or lecturers to build healthy relationship no matter when and where they are. Sharing study note, lecture, and discussing class project will be interactive and engaging. By this way, learners will be active content creators rather than just being passive receivers of knowledge (Burbules, 2016).

CONCERNS OVER SOCIAL MEDIA AS TEACHING AND LEARNING TOOLS

Besides all those advantages, several adverse effects may occur either in the classroom or outside the classroom as a result of social media use. These negative impacts can affect both teachers and students. Firstly, the biggest problem is social media can be very distractive tools (Selwyn, 2016). 827 out of 1518 respondents of Selwyn’s study said YouTube made them procrastinate many things. Social media distracts the focus of most students from the learning activity as well as from assignments and responsibilities (Balakrisnan et al., 2017; Manca & Ranieri, 2017; Selwyn, 2016). The use of technology is likely to lead to addiction, procrastination, and it distracts students from doing university work into watching videos, messaging, and others (Allam & Elvas, 2016).

Secondly, as the internet is open to everyone, teachers’ and students’ privacy issues become another concern of the use of social media as education tools (Balakrisnan et al., 2017; Liu, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2017). For example, students may check their teacher timeline updates, photos, videos and vice versa. Also, possible abuse of information can occur as the result of student-teacher interaction in using these tools (Manca & Ranieri, 2017). Moreover, the unreliable sources, inaccurate contents and biased reports are easy to be found on the internet which can lead to false and misleading information (Liu, 2010). These issues cause many institutions and policy makers prohibit the utilization/use of social media for teaching and learning (Brady et al., 2010).

The reluctance of some academics to integrate media technology into the curriculum is also a serious setback (Allam & Elyas, 2016; Lumby et al., 2014), especially in developing countries. As a consequence, they are unaware and unwilling to innovate and develop social media usage for better teaching and learning practices. The




integration of social media as teaching and learning tools is seen as “a choice made at the instructor level rather than an institutional decision” which seems only to be experimental tools (Tess, 2013 p. A66).

Moreover, reasons such as fear gradual loss of traditional teachers’ roles and instructions, traditional vision of institutions, unwise relationship management with students, teachers’ privacy issue, and lack of technical support are preventing faculty staff from accepting social media implementation. All those sociocultural issues can hinder educators to try and develop innovative instruction methods using the social media tools for professional uses (Manca & Ranieri, 2017).

Some other concerns are likely linked only to particular countries. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, there is a common belief among teachers that social media is not well accommodated in the current curriculum in relation to the taught material offered in textbooks (Allam & Elyas, 2016). Also, many teachers are still unaware of the importance of technology for teaching which makes them unwilling to develop their new literacy skills and slow to adapt to changes. Various technical problems such as bad infrastructures, poor internet connectivity, unstable electric power, which are experienced by students who lives in rural areas are also deterring the use of social media in teaching (Selwyn, 2016). These constraints, however, cannot fully stop the usage of media technology but will create difficulty for students and teachers (Selwyn, 2012).

THEN, WHAT CAN BE DONE?

As the use of social media as teaching and learning tools also come with challenges and negative effects, scholars and educators have been working on strategies to minimize and prevent the impacts. First, the most crucial step is related to student’s perception and attitude toward digital technology. As found in a study by Liu (2010), 50% of students did not trust the information they received from social media because of some reasons such as scam, online identity, and lack of privacy control. Liu adds that before using social media as learning tools, teachers need to find out their “students attitude towards public trust”(p. 107). In addition to student’s attitude, it is also absolutely necessary that teachers are aware of the potentials, limitations, and purposes of the social media as educational tools (Burbules, 2016). Students need to be reminded how far social media can be used in learning, and what will happen when they misuse them. For example, an instructor can repeatedly say that anything they upload on the internet, it practically can be accessed, exposed, encrypted, forwarded and downloaded by anyone. Second, concerning privacy concern as a possible abuse of information caused by teachers-students relationship, it can be overcome by



separating academic and personal posting in the social media (Manca & Ranieri, 2017). For example, a tutor should have two social media accounts. One will be used fully for all educational postings such as lesson materials, instructions and assignments are done and accessible for students. For social life, it is better to have a different account to keep students' positive perception towards their teachers. Instructors also have to be very familiar with the tools she/he is going to use (Daer & Potts, 2014).

For the barriers within the curriculum, it is important for the government and institutions to work on enriching the credible media resources for teacher and students, to enhance teaching and learning system management, and to encourage more research about technology effectiveness for learning (Henderson et al., 2015). Moreover, universities should develop the policies and practices especially regarding the improvement in use of mainstream established technology rather than focus on the opportunities of social media tools and technology (Henderson et al., 2015; Selwyn, 2016). This will see the development of digital pedagogies that "fit with wider structures of curriculum, assessment and the constraints of the academic timetable" (Selwyn, 2016. p. 1020).

However, it is vital for teachers to know the strength of social media use in teaching and eliminate any obstructions that can cause the problems to students' learning activity in their use of social media as learning tools. In a situation where these tools are not so beneficial to engage students and cannot assist lecturers to improve their teaching, teachers should avoid using them as sometimes technology is not the best choice. Social media and technology have always been merely tools in teaching and learning process, and they have their specific functions and only work best as designed to be because, for some modules/subject lessons, they might be not very efficient. For example, technology is found to be more effective for science, so it is recommended and encouraged the use of media technology-assisted approach in teaching science subjects such as chemistry, physics, biology, etc. (Chauhan, 2017). Thus, by knowing the specific treatments and needs, the teachers will be able to prepare appropriate content material and learning activities by implementing the social media to provide some assists for themselves and their students.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the use of social media has many advantages for teaching and learning activities. This paper also shows some constraints and possible solutions. As I show to investigate the benefits of social media tools, I believe that they are very useful to be applied in the Indonesian context, especially for higher education, and even more so in this disruptive era due to Covid-19 pandemic. Modern technology helps improve


students' active learning, increase students' confidence, and stimulate students' engagements. Besides, it also enhances positive collaboration, makes learning more accessible, helps students organize their study needs, and eases access to tutor, friends, feedback and learning resources.

As the social media use in the university is sometimes debatable because of some adverse effects it may cause, social media tools still can assist educational practices when they are properly used. The application of social media in teaching comes with challenges. However, considering that these tools are vastly used among university students, we have to take advantages of the situation because students will feel more comfortable and enthusiastic when they learn with the tools they are familiar with. As for the suggestions, it is important for teachers to develop students' attitude before applying social media for learning and make sure use it is useful for educational contexts. Moreover, universities and policy makers, as well as the government, should always address the development and support the integration of technology into education since there are many that can be done to improve efficiency and effectiveness of social media as educational tools. More specific research and investigation are encouraged to find out the best approach to implement social media, and what social media is best to use regularly as learning tools. Therefore, the benefits of social media can be seen to be very effective and offer many new opportunities towards better education. Knowing these, hopefully, more instructors will integrate social media to support their teaching activity in higher education in Indonesia.

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