

Students Social Media Competencies and their Attitude towards Adopting Blended Learning Mode of Instruction

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Abstract

This study analysed undergraduate students' social media competencies and how it affects their attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction. The research design adopted for the study is descriptive survey. A sample of four hundred and seventy-three (473) two hundred level undergraduate students from the six departments in the Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 96-item questionnaire titled Blended Learning Readiness Tool, adapted from an instrument developed by Mohawk College, Canada, for measuring readiness of students to offer a blended learning course. Two research questions and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The research questions were answered using simple percentages while the hypothesis was analysed using ANOVA. The findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between students' social media competencies and their attitude towards adopting a blended learning mode of instruction. It was therefore recommended among others that Faculty should set up students' resource centres, well-equipped with technological devices and Internet connectivity so as to increase students' access to social media.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Social Media, Web 1.0 Technologies, Web 2.0 Technologies.

Introduction

The World Wide Web (WWW) or the Web as it is generally called has greatly influenced human activities in all areas. Ever since the evolution of its second generation, communication has taken a different dimension.

These new set of technologies, also known as Web 2.0 technologies, allow people to create information on the web, communicate and collaborate with friends and colleagues. This is quite different from the initial Web called Web 1.0 which refers to the state of the WWW when it emerged in 1991 up until 2001. It emerged with users searching for information in books, news, music and other materials that were found in digital form (Eteokleous-Grigoriou and Ktoridou, 2013). It was like a warehouse of information with users visiting the ware house just to retrieve needed information. Users of Web 1.0 could only read, receive and research from the Web (Eteokleous-Grigoriou and Ktoridou 2013). They were not given the opportunity to share ideas, nor make valuable contributions. Web 1.0 was called the static web because it contained websites that served static content. In other words, users were passive because they could not contribute any knowledge to such websites, It was a one-way communication. Web 1.0 sites were neither interactive nor collaborative. Hina (2012) outlines some features of Web 1.0 which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i) It linked web pages and hyperlink
- ii) It was the mostly read-only web
- iii) It focused on companies home pages
- iv) Its content was owned by private individuals or organizations
- v) It divided the WWW into usable directories
- vi) It was mainly used for advertising.

All of that changed when the Web evolved giving birth to Web 2.0 technologies. The term Web 2.0 was originally coined by Darcy DiNucci in 1999, but was popularized in 2004 by Tim O'Reilly (Haughn, (2015). Dictionary.com (2014) defines Web 2.0 technologies as "web applications that go beyond displaying individual pages of static content and allow a community of users to interact with the site and each other by adding or updating the content". There are over 3000 free to use applications that are described as Web 2.0 (Anderson, 2012). These applications are flexible and their flexibility allows them to be utilized in emergent ways and by different users. These applications come with a variety of very attractive features which has appealed to millions of users. With Web 2.0 came ideas such as blogging, discussion boards (also known as forum),

has shown that this has helped students take control of their own learning. Junco, Heiberger and Loken (2011) carried out an experiment to determine the level of students' engagement with the use of social media, twitter, in particular. They quantified engagement by using a 19-item scale based on the National Survey of Student Engagement. Their description of engagement included students' active participation and investment in academic activities, co-curricular activities, and interactions with faculty and peers. Using a control and an experimental group, their ANOVA results showed that the experimental group had a significantly greater increase in engagement than the control group, as well as higher semester grade point averages. Their analyses of Twitter communications showed that students and faculty were both highly engaged in the learning process in ways that transcended traditional classroom activities.

Cash (2010) carried out a study that sought to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the level of Web 2.0 usage and self-reported student academic achievement among high school students. His participants included 291 Georgia high school students. He developed and used a Web 2.0 and Student Achievement Questionnaire to gather data on an online site and tested seven hypotheses. The results showed that a statistical significance was obtained in relation to the amount of Web 2.0 usage and literature letter grade, and Web 2.0 usage and extracurricular activity participation. Other part of his findings suggested a stronger female use in Web 2.0 resources, as well as high extracurricular activity participation correlating with higher academic achievement.

Anwaruddin (2013) carried out an action research on the use of web 2.0 and its effect on language learners' motivation. Having observed that most students use computer-based technology (CBT) in their daily activities, he decided to use computer assisted language learning (CALL) as an intervention in the research study. His CALL curriculum was focused on Web 2.0 and its applications for educational purposes. The main objective of the study was to understand the effects of a CALL curriculum on the participants' learning motivation. To meet the objective, he designed CALL and non-CALL lessons to teach English to a class of first-year undergraduate students. Comparison between

student behaviours during the CALL and non-CALL lessons and analysis of the triangulated data indicated that the use of Web 2.0 in the CALL curriculum contributed to an increase in students' motivation as well as their learning of the target language. Olele (2014) thus concludes that students' engagement with digital devices and online social networking are strong forces that education cannot ignore, and though, most students use social networking sites for entertainment and communication, teachers can use that avenue to transform and expand the learning experiences of students.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that instructors have incorporated social media technologies into their traditional face-to-face lectures, thus leading to blended or hybrid learning. Blended learning is a form of learning where the traditional classroom instruction is combined with some form of online learning. Sloan consortium as cited in www.FacultyFocus.com defines blended learning as "instruction that has between 30 and 80 percent of the course content delivered online". Usually, when designing a blended learning course, the two modes of learning, that is, face-to-face and online, are carefully integrated so that they complement each other. In this way, students will not see them as separate contexts (Kelly 2012). One great advantage of using blended learning mode of instruction is that it allows educators to integrate different media inputs such as video, audio or audio-graphic media. Weimer (2012) cited in Faculty Focus.com describes how video could be incorporated into a blended learning course. An instructor may record a part of the lecture using video format within the time range of 45 to 60 minutes lecture, and post it on a media sharing site such as YouTube or Vimeo. Students watch and listen to the video, make a list of questions or points they do not understand and bring them to the class. These questions would be read aloud and students and instructor could now discuss the questions with students working in small groups. The students would eventually develop and submit a group answer (Weimer, 2012). However, in a developing country such as Nigeria, adopting blended learning is not without its challenges. Outside the problems of poor electricity supply, poor internet connectivity, little or no access to internet facilities, there is also the issue of instructor's technological competencies and students' social

media competencies. This study however, focuses on students' social media competencies and how it affects their attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction.

Methodology

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Determine the social media competencies of students for the use of blended learning.
- ii. Ascertain the attitude of students towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction in the Faculty of Education.

Research Questions

- i. How competent are students in the Faculty of Education in the use of social media for blended learning?
- ii. What is the attitude of students towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction in the Faculty of Education?

Hypothesis:

H0: I there is no significant relationship between students' social media competencies and their attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction.

The research design used for the study is the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all two hundred level undergraduate students from the six departments in the Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. They are one thousand, one hundred and eighty-four (1184) students. The sample consisted of four hundred and seventy-three (473) students. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select students from the six departments. Students in each department were stratified according to their teaching options. Then two (2) teaching options were randomly selected from each department. All the students in those 2 teaching options from the 6 departments were used for the study. This brought the number to 473. This number constitutes 46% of the entire population. The instrument for data collection was a 96-item

questionnaire titled: Blended Learning Readiness Tool (BLELRT). The instrument was developed by Mohawk College, Canada for measuring readiness of students to offer a blended learning course but was modified by the researchers to suit the objectives of the study. The instrument covered items such as devices personally owned, access to technology, competence in the use of online communication tools and readiness for blended learning program. The research questions were answered using mean, while the null hypotheses was analysed using ANOVA.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are students' social media competencies for the use of blended learning?

Table 1: Table showing the mean of students' social media competencies for the use of blended learning in the six departments in the Faculty of Education.

Departments	Curriculum Studies/Edu. Tech. (EDC)	Human Kinetics and health Education (KHE)	Adult and non-formal Educ.(DAE)	Educ. Foundations (EDF)	Educ. Management (EDF)	Educ. Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and (EDP)
N	Valid 4 Missing 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0
Mean	2951.7500	1308.2500	1244.2500	1813.7500	3372.2500	3623.7500

Research question 2: What is the attitude of students towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction in the Faculty of Education?

Table 2: Table showing the mean of students' attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction in the six departments in the Faculty of Education.

Departments	Curriculum Studies/Edu. Tech. (EDC)	Human Kinetics and health Education (KHE)	Adult and non-formal Educ.(DAE)	Educ. Foundations (EDF)	Educ. Management (EDF)	Educ. Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and (EDP)
N	Valid 4 Missing 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0
Mean	1451.7500	811.0000	1117.0000	1149.2500	1442.7500	1626.0000

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between students' social media competencies and their attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction.

Table 3: Relationship between students' social media competencies and their attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	tcal	t-tab	Sig.	Remark
Regression	209121.464	1	209121.464	14.472	19.2	.019 ^a	No
Residual	57799.869	4	14449.967				Significance
Total	266921.333	5					

From table 1, students in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling have the highest mean score of 3623.75, thus, they are the most competent in the use of social media. They are closely followed by students in the Department of Educational Management who have a mean score of 3372.25. In third position are the students from the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology. They have a mean score of 2951.75. The fourth, fifth and sixth positions are occupied by students' from the Departments of Educational Foundations, Human Kinetics and Health Education, and Adult and Non-Formal Education, respectively. Their mean scores of 1813.75, 1308.25 and 1244.25 respectively, show that they are the least competent in the use of social media. This study is similar to a research conducted by, Bosch (2009) in Eren (2012). The study explored students use of Facebook and lecturer engagement with students via social media at the University of Cape Town. The article showed that while there are positive benefits to using Facebook for academic purposes, there might be certain challenges like computer literacy and uneven access. Thus, when students lack competence in the use of computers, it equally affects their use of social media.

From Table 2, students in the Department of Psychology, Guidance and Counselling with the highest mean score of 1626, have a more positive attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction.

They are closely followed by students in the Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology who have a mean score of 1451.75. In third position are students of the Department of Educational Management with a mean score of 1442.75. The fourth, fifth and sixth positions are occupied by students' from the Departments of Educational Foundations, Adult and Non-Formal Education and Human Kinetics and Health Education, respectively. Their mean scores of 1149.25, 1117 and 811 respectively, show that they have a less positive attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction.

This study correlates the study carried out by Eren (2012). The primary purpose of his research was to explore students attitudes towards a Facebook supported language teaching. His sample was 48 undergraduate students who were enrolled in one year compulsory English preparatory class in a university in Gaziantep, Turkey. The findings showed that students' attitudes towards Facebook, as a form of social media are mostly positive. Students welcomed using social networking site as a supplementary to the curriculum. Most students showed that they love spending time on Facebook and exercises, videos and other sharing in group are useful for improving their language skills. Ja'ashan, (2015) carried out a study that identified perceptions and attitudes that blended learning provides to students' learning experiences as well as to investigate negative impressions in blended English courses from the learners' perception. He conducted a survey through a questionnaire at University of Bisha, English department from eight levels of undergraduate program in both boys' and girls' colleges. The instrument measured students' perceptions and attitudes towards BL. His findings concluded that in general the students' perceptions and attitudes towards Blended Learning were positive.

From Table 3, since $t_{cal} (14.472)$ is less than $t_{crit} (19.2)$ at 5 df and 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between students' social media competencies and their attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction. The result above is a bit surprising to the researchers because an earlier research carried out by Fomsi, Nwosu and Chinagorom (2015), revealed that departments of EDF, KHE, and DAE have the lowest percentage of

students that own technological devices for the use of blended learning (see Table 4). These departments are still the ones who have the lowest mean scores in social media competencies and who also show the least positive attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction (see Tables 1 and 2). Similarly, students from the Departments of EDP, EDM and EDC who have the highest mean scores in social media competencies, show the most positive attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction. Therefore, the researchers were expecting to see a positive relationship between social media competencies and students attitude towards adopting blended learning mode of instruction. But submitting the data to statistical analysis, the researchers discovered that there is no significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 4: Percentage (%) of students' ownership of technological devices in the different departments

Keys: A-Android Phones, W-Windows phones, N-Nokia Smart Phones, IPD-Ipads, IP-Iphones, T-Tablets, BB-Blackberry phones, L-laptop, DE-Desktops.

Dept.	Devices										Total	%
	A	W	N	IPD	IP	T	BB	L	DE	Others		
EDF	7	18	9	-	2	-	11	7	2	7	63	13.32
EDC	15	12	13	2	6	9	20	6	1	3	87	18.39
EDM	28	15	6	10	10	12	18	12	-	1	112	25.16
EDP	18	13	10	3	8	4	33	15	1	4	109	23.68
KHE	15	2	19	-	-	-	8	4	3	8	52	10.99
DAE	5	3	15	-	3	3	5	10	1	5	50	10.57
Total	80	63	72	15	30	28	95	54	8	28	473	100%

Source: Fomsi, Nwosu and Chinagorom (2015): Journal of Education in Developing Areas (JEDA), Volume 19, No.1, 2015.

The implication of this result is that even though some of the students are not very competent in the use of social media, they still desire to use blended learning for their courses. In a conversation with the students, the researchers discovered that some of the students seem uncertain about blended learning and some think they may not have the time for the use of blended learning. However, they are willing and ready to learn more about blended learning and to use blended learning.

Conclusion

Research has shown that when social media is used for teaching and learning, it engages students and improves their digital literacy. It also allows them to share knowledge. In view of this fact, it becomes necessary that irrespective of the level of social media competencies of students, blended learning mode of instruction should be introduced into the Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. With this mode of instruction, students' social media competencies will be strengthened and their information and digital literacy skills will be enhanced.

Recommendations

1. Faculty should set up students' resource centres that are well equipped with technological devices and Internet connectivity so as to increase students' access to social media.
2. The University administration should create portals for various faculties where students could post comments on the faculty's blogs and use other social networking tools to collaborate with their course mates and instructors.
3. Educators should put effort to incorporate social media into their teaching. This will enable students practice using it and help them take responsibility for their own learning.
4. Students should be encouraged to incorporate social media into their academics and not just use it for social life.

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