

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN TEACHING BY ACADEMIC STAFF OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH WEST AND NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

Social media are becoming the most important tools for interaction among people, where everybody can share, exchange, comment, discuss and create information and knowledge in a collaborative way. Based on a representative sample of teaching staff from six selected federal polytechnics, the study investigated their level of awareness, participation, adoption and utilisation of social media as new forms of public academic sphere and their experiences in the use of social media. To achieve this objective, this study was carried out using the quantitative method of survey. The population of this study was the academic staff of selected Federal Polytechnics in Southwest and North central, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of samples. First, the population of study was stratified into the various faculties/Schools in the selected six federal polytechnics after which the simple random sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire to the 420 selected respondents. Data collected using the questionnaire was statistically analyzed and presented using tables, frequencies and percentages. Findings from the study revealed that awareness was not an issue, lecturers are very aware of social media. The study showed that lecturers are much more willing to embrace social media in their personal than they are to use it for their professional or teaching purposes. The level of personal use of social media among lecturers mirrors that of the general population. The study concludes by making recommendations on how teachers in higher education institutions in Nigeria can adopt, utilize, appreciate and appropriate online social media for teaching, learning, research, outreach, professional development and publishing.

Keywords: social media, teaching, learning, utilization, adoption.

Introduction and Background to the Study

Social media are Internet sites where people interact freely sharing and discussing information using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio. This can be done on one-to-one basis, just like the e-mail or in a more public way just as comment posted for everybody to see (Witters, 2007). In today's evolving society, there is no denying that the social media is having a significant influence on the audience and user.

The Internet has been transformed in the past years from a system primarily oriented on information provision into a medium for social communication and community-building. The

notion of social media and Web 2.0 emerged to widen the horizon of interactivity found in information and communication technology (Morah, 2012). Thus, the usage of the Internet by people in and outside all works of life has become a global veer and this activity is growing at a very unstoppable progression. As at April 2017, the global figure of Internet active users is now 3.81 Billion, while 2.91 Billion were social media users and still counting (Statista 2017). This means global Internet active users are now over the 3 billion mark equaling 51% global population (Statista, 2017). By March 2017 total users of the Internet in Nigeria are over 93 million (93,591,174) (Internetworldstats, 2017).

According to Wikipedia, social media represents a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information content which brought about the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media are also Internet sites where people interact freely, sharing and discussing information about each other and their lives, using a multi-media mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio (Bruce & Douglas, 2008).

Social media are becoming more and more widespread in higher education. It has penetrated deeply into every aspect of the academy: teaching, outreach, research, professional development, publishing, campus tours, and student life. The trend can be observed in many higher education institutions around the world. There are many ways of appropriating online social media for teaching and learning. Many current studies suggest that the high adoption and utilization of social media applications as an addition to formal educational settings offers new opportunities for innovating and modernizing education institutions and for preparing learners for the 21st century (Redecker, 2009). While social media's start was for personal use, it has evolved to be used in virtually all domains. From a preliminary check, it appears that almost every polytechnic and university in the world has adopted some form of social media, using it for general outreach, to attract potential students, maintain alumni relations, and increase institutional reputation and pride. A primary reason to adopt social media in the classroom is because it is familiar to almost everybody and also because it does not cost and requires minimal training. One of the largest surveys of social media in higher education to date shows that universities can lever social media into the classroom and ensure it's used more than it is now (Qualman, 2009). Also, some academic experts believe that social media can be used as an effective teaching tool in higher education because of its ease of use, ready availability, and individual affordability and network effects.

Perfect as the new media seem, concerns are however being raised about the ability of the social media to create an ideal forum for constructive academic discourse and deliberation that could help in assessing the participation, usage of social media across various platforms and its impact in teaching and learning. In this study, teachers' use of social media as a tool for enhancing the teaching and learning process was explored.

Statement of the Problem

In today's digital economy, success in businesses and other spheres of activities is attributed to the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are not exempted from these rapidly changing technological advancements and hence, cannot afford to lag behind these developments as these can

provide valuable insights to the academic community (Dumpit & Fernandez 2017). Today's academics have become technologically savvy and pro-active users of ICTs. They are seen as 'active producers of knowledge as new social media platforms has seemingly become responsible for their teaching, instructing and mentoring.

The overwhelming popularity of social media has led to a proliferation of studies that examined its role in higher education. These include analysis of social media usage for learning in relation to students' learning styles (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016); relationship between personal, teaching, and professional purposes of use of social media by higher education scholars (Manca & Ranieri, 2016); learner-generated content and its effects on learning outcomes and satisfaction (Orús, Belanche, Casalo, Fraj, & Gurrea, (2016); impact of online social networks on academic performance (Paul, Baker, & Cochran, 2012); and success factors of social networking sites (Schlenkrich & Sewry, 2012). Different researches had been carried out in various areas of social media looking at the academic performance of students, teaching and learning using Twitter and Blogs; other studies have addressed other areas of interest and revealed social media to be space where people explore, express, and reinforce aspects of their personal identity through expression (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Across disciplines, research related to the assessment of social media on institution of higher learning academic staff, on academic interface, participation, usage, academic outcomes, and academic scholarship is quite scarce. The recentness of these studies is but one indication of the paucity of research on the extent of pattern of participation and usage of social media for teaching across multiple platforms of subscription among the academic staff of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Also, studies on social media usage for teaching are scarce in developing countries like Nigeria as most of the studies highlighted above are carried out in developed countries. This study will fill the gap in literature.

Owing to this new digital media shift, one wonders to what extent selected academics/lecturers in selected federal polytechnics in Nigeria have personal interface with social media, participation and usage in their day-to-day academic activities in building of intellectual community. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the impact and challenges of social media usage on teaching and learning in tertiary institutions.

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the level of lecturers' awareness of social media sites.
- To determine the various purposes to which lecturers put social media sites to use.
- To find out factors that determine the levels of use of social media platforms by polytechnic lecturers in Nigeria.
- To identify the barriers faced by lecturers in using social media platforms in teaching

Research Questions

- What is the level of lecturers' awareness of social media sites?
- To determine the various purposes to which lecturers put social media sites to use.
- What are the factors that determine the levels of use of social media platforms by polytechnic lecturers in Nigeria?
- What barriers are faced by lecturers in using social media in teaching?

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Social Media

Social media is a 21st century term used to broadly define a variety of networked tools or technologies that emphasize the social aspects of the Internet as a channel for communication, collaboration, and creative expression, and is often interchangeable with the terms Web 2.0 and social software. Nation describes “social media as social instrument of communication which are different from conventional instrument like newspaper or magazine. They are online content created by people using highly accessibly and scaleable publishing technologies to disseminate information across geographical boundaries, providing interaction among people” (2010, p.12). Kaplan and Haenlein, quoted in Ganiyu and Qasim (2011) defined social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user generated content.

Social media emerged with advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web. They are usually associated with the terms ‘Web 2.0’ which is used to describe websites that provide opportunity for a user to interact with the sender of the message. Nwabueze (2010) notes that Web 2.0 refers to the state of the Web from 2004 till date. A period when interactive websites emerged as opposed to web ‘1.0’ which describes the state of the web to 2004. Web based communities, social networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs are among examples of ‘Web 2.0’ sites Nwabueze (2010).

Some refer to social media as social networks. However, the two terms are said to be same side of a coin. Wikipedia defines social networks as “a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called “nodes”, which are connected by one or more specific types of inter-dependency such as; friendship, kinship, financial exchange, dislikes, sexual relationships or relationship of beliefs, knowledge or prestige”. While it also defines social media as “media designed to be disseminated through social interactions, created using highly accessible and scalable publishing technique”.

Wikipedia notes that social media use Internet and Web-based technologies to transform broadcast media monologues (that is one to many) into social media dialogues (many to many). It supports the democratization of knowledge and information, transforming from content consumers into content producers. Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro blogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, videos, ratings, and social bookmarking. By applying a set of theories in the field of media reassert (social presence and social richness) and social processes (self-presentation and self-disclosure), Kaplan and Haenlein created a classification scheme in Business Horizons Article (2010), with six different types of social media which include: Collaborative projects: example Wikipedia; Blogs and microblogs: examples Twitter; Content communities: example YouTube; Social networking sites: example Facebook; Virtual game world: example World of Warcraft; Virtual social worlds: examples Second Life. These social media services focus on some or all of the seven functional building blocks which are; identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationship, reputation and groups.

Social Media Use in Higher Education

Various scholars have identified benefits of social media in pedagogy. According to Jones (2015, p.93), “social media technologies such as Blogs and Twitter are no longer only used for leisure. Rather, over the years, these technologies have also become platforms for interacting and engaging with learners”. Some academic experts believe that social media can be used as an effective teaching tool in higher education because of its ease of use, ready availability, and individual affordability and network effects.

Academic staff members and students of tertiary institutions typically use the term social media interchangeably with Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is typically defined by the characteristics, or technical design patterns, set forth by (O'Reilly, 2005). Social media, a term coined in 2005 after the term Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define Web 2.0 as a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. The social aspect of the term “implies that it exists in a social space” (Rodriguez, 2011), which may be used for individual, professional, and/or entertainment purposes, and leverages social networks cultivated by individuals. The media portion of the term suggests that the social interactions are mediated through social networks, digital networks, and digital devices. Admittedly, the lines among social media and Web 2.0 tools, or “web apps,” are blurred. Broadly, social media encompasses (a) social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, (b) media sharing sites, such as YouTube and Flickr, (c) creation and publishing tools, such as wikis and blogs, (d) aggregation and republishing through RSS feeds, and (e) remixing of content and republishing tools (Greenhow, 2011).

Proponents of Web technologies in education have long argued that these technologies supplement and upgrade the widely accepted traditional delivery of lessons to students. For example, with reference to traditional learning, Vygotsky (1980) argued that human beings learn best if there are some sorts of interaction through collaborative learning and group work so that students work together on a task. In this social media era, the said interaction and collaboration in teaching and learning is now implemented virtually without worrying about time and space limitations or barriers. To this end, some educational researchers have coined the term Learning 2.0 in reference to “a spectrum of all pedagogical approaches that draw heavily upon Web 2.0 tools [Facebook, Twitter, blogs, WhatsApps, etc.] and services” (Wheeler, 2010, p.107).

Despite the benefits accorded by social media in learning and teaching activities, Light (2011) identified elements that shape how Web 2.0 tools can be used meaningfully. Without structure, social media can negatively impact student learning. Also, recent studies suggest that there are various challenges militating against successful integration of most social media in teaching and learning in university environments. For example, in Africa, some of the factors that militate against the use of social media include lack of technical skills by academic staff, inadequate technological infrastructure and epileptic power supply (Light, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on diffusion of innovations theory of communication by Rogers (1995). Diffusion of innovations theory states that an innovation (that is, an idea, new technique, or

new technology) diffuses or spreads thought a society in a predictable pattern. A few people will adopt an innovation as soon as they hear of it. Other people will take longer to try something new, and still others will take much longer. When a new media technology or other innovation is adopted rapidly by a great number of people, it is said to explode into being. The end result of diffusion is that people as part of a social system adopt a new idea, behavior or product (Esimokha, 2014). Rogers and other diffusion researchers have identified five separate categories of adopters based on the degree of their “innovativeness” which is: Innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. This classification can be used to understand the process by which information technology has become part of the journalistic profession (Rogers, 1995). This theory conforms to the study because social media are new tools academics use in carrying out their duties, yet some are still sceptical about its impact in the field of teaching and learning and are reluctant to adopt them or use them.

Methodology

This study was carried out using the quantitative method of survey. The survey research method was adopted for this study, since it aims at eliciting data on social media usage, participation, teaching, impact and benefits derived therefrom. The population of this study was the academic staff of selected Federal Polytechnics in Southwest and North central, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in the selection of samples. First, the population of study was stratified into the various faculties/Schools in the selected six federal polytechnics after which the simple random sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire to the 420 selected respondents. Data collected using the questionnaire was statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequencies, tables and percentages.

Discussion of Findings

Data was collected from a sample of 420 lecturers of the six (6) federal polytechnics under study. Out of the 420 copies of questionnaire administrated 415 copies were completed, returned and found usable. This represents a response rate of 99%.

1: Lecturer awareness of social media sites

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	415	100%
No	—	0%
Total	415	100%

Source: Field survey, 2019.

As it can be expected given the high level of awareness of social media among the general population, table 1 shows that 415 respondents (100%) of the lecturers are aware of social media sites.

Table 2: Lecturers access to social media sites

Accessibility	Frequency	Percentage
I use android / smart phone	182	44
I use laptop	117	28
I use desktop	33	8
I use all the above devices	83	20
Total	415	100

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table 2 shows that 182 respondents representing 44 per cent access social media sites using their smart phones, 117 respondents said they access social media using laptop computers, 33 respondents through desktop computers while 83 respondents access social media sites through all the devices.

Table 3: Lecturers' personal use of social media

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Use	397	95.7
Don't use	18	4.3
Total	415	100

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table 3 above shows that lecturers' personal use of social media sites is rather high, 95.7 per cent of the respondents make use of social media for personal purposes while 18 (4.3%) of the respondents say they do not use social media.

Table 4: Lecturers' professional use of social media

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Use	217	52.3
Don't use	198	47.3
Total	415	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

In addition to personal use, table 4 reveals that lecturers also make use of social media for professional purposes. The survey shows that 217 (52.3%) use social media for professional purposes while 198 (47.7%) do not use social media to support their profession.

Table 5: Lecturers use of social media for teaching

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Use	70	16.9
Do not use	345	83.1
Total	415	100

Sources: Field survey, 2019.

Table 4 reveals that majority of the respondents 345 (83.1%) do not use social media in teaching while 70 (16.9%) respondents use social in teaching.

Table 5: Purpose for which social media is mostly used

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching	45	10.9
Personal	306	73.7
Professional	64	15.4
Total	415	100

Sources: Field survey, 2019.

The table 5 above shows that majority of those sampled use social media for personal purposes. 306 (73.7%) respondents' use social media for personal purposes, 64 (15.4%) respondents use social media for professional purposes while 45 (10%) respondents use social media for teaching purposes.

Table 6: Frequency of lecturers' social media usage in teaching

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	25	6
Occasionally	75	18.1
Rarely	191	46
Never	124	29.9
Total	415	100

Sources: Field survey, 2019.

Table 6 shows that 25 (6%) respondents use social media in teaching weekly, 75 (18.1%) respondents use social media occasionally to teach, 191 (46%) rarely use social media in teaching while 124 (29.9%) have never used social media in teaching.

Table 7: Factors that determine lecturers' use of social media in teaching

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Wi fi/ network availability	36	9
Power supply	70	17
Possession of android phone / computer	68	16
Digital literacy	107	26
All of the above	134	32
Total	415	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 7 sought to identify the factors that determine lecturers use of social media in teaching.

Table 8: Barriers to the use of social media in teaching

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of support at my institution	87	21
Lack of ICT skills	98	24
Takes too much time to learn or use	55	13
Lack of stable power supply	75	18
Concern about privacy	64	15
Integrity of student submission	36	9
Total	415	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 8 reveals the barriers militating against the use of social media in teaching by lecturers in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

On this part are discussed the results gained from the survey on the lecturers' use of social media for teaching and learning in South west and North central Nigeria. Polytechnic lecturers in South west and North central Nigeria are well aware of social media sites. 100% of the lecturers report that they are aware of social media sites. The survey also revealed that majority of the lecturers 44% access social media sites through the use of android phones. 28% use laptop computer, 8% use desktop computer while 20% use all the above devices.

Because lecturers might use social media for a number of purposes, this study asked teachers to distinguish between three different types of use: personal use only with no relationship to professional or teaching responsibilities and finally, use in the classes they teach. Lecturers' personal use of social media sites was quite high. As shown in table 3, 95.7 % of all teachers use social media for personal purposes. In addition to purely personal use, lecturers were asked about social media in support of their professional careers (on the job, but not while teaching), and about their use of social media in the classes they teach. The survey shows that more 52.3 % of the lecturers make professional use of social media outside the classes they teach. However, the rate of use of social media for professional purposes remains lower than that of their personal use. This difference implies that lecturers who use social media do so for mainly personal reasons.

In an effort to know what factors determine lecturers' use of social media in teaching, 9% of respondents said that Wi-Fi/ network availability, 17% cited power supply as a determinant, 16% respondents are of the opinion that possession of android/ phone/ computer are determinants, 26% respondents are of the view that digital literacy is a determinant while 32% respondents said all of the above factors are determinants of lecturers use of social media in teaching.

Table 8 revealed the barriers militating against the use of social media in teaching by lecturers in Nigeria. 87 respondents representing 21% said that lack of support at my institution

constituted a barrier, 98 respondents 24% said that lack of ICT Skills is another barrier, while 55 representing 13% said that social media takes too much time to learn and use. Also 75 participants in the survey said that unstable power supply constitute a setback to their use of social media for teaching, 64 respondents representing 15% said that concern about privacy is another barrier while 36 respondents representing 9% report that integrity of student submission is also a barrier.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The major findings of the study showed that polytechnic lecturers (all the participants in the survey) are well aware of the major social media sites, however, there is a large diversity among the patterns of use as many academic staff use the sites more for personal and professional purposes than for teaching. The level of personal use of social media among teachers mirrors that of the general population. The study also pointed out the difficulties and concerns lecturers encounter in the use of social media. Some barriers identified by the study for the poor adoption and utilization of social media for learning and teaching by lecturers are lack of ICT skills, lack of support from their institutions and the time required to learn or use social media applications.

Unless some fundamental steps are taken to address these barriers, the adoption and utilization of social media in teaching and learning will be very selective and continue to lag behind lecturers' use of social media in other aspects of their lives. The number of lecturers who use social media in the classroom does not represent a majority, but teaching use will improve when the barriers associated with the use of social media are addressed. Therefore, a number of recommendations are put forward to enable lecturers to adopt and utilize social media in their teaching activities.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher suggests some recommendations which if implemented may encourage the use of social media among lecturers in Nigeria: Workshops should be organized to sensitize teachers on the benefits of using digital technology to facilitate teaching; teachers should be made to undergo ICT training in order to develop media and digital literacy skills. It is also important for teachers to understand students' needs and change in learning pattern to stay in touch with them and provide quality teaching and learning experience; institutions of higher learning should make Internet freely accessible or highly subsidized to all academic staff. So too, Wi-Fi should be installed covering the whole campus and should be accessible via lecturers mobile devices and laptops; it should not be taken for granted that teachers can find means to access the Internet when an instructor incorporates Internet based technologies such as social media into a course. Rather, lecturers intending to incorporate social media or related technologies into their courses should make prior arrangements with ICT directorate, so that lecturers should access computers without trouble. This becomes paramount if blogs and Wikis are to be used because most basic phones rarely support these applications; using social media haphazardly comes with no reward. Rather lecturers intending to use these technologies for pedagogical purposes should set guidelines well in advance so that students should be well aware about what the lecturer expects from them.

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