Effectiveness of Social Media Integration in

College-Level Writing Courses – A Quantitative Study

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Various social media platforms are available to educators and Instructional Designers which can enhance college-level Creative Writing courses. These tools have the potential to allow students to develop their own social media sites to be used as digital portfolios. The production of these portfolios bolsters traditional content, student engagement, and authentic learning.

Face-to-face creative writing courses have seen structural changes in recent years as social media platforms became available. These technologies allow educators to engage students with class material using interactive tools. This advancement allows educators to participate in student-centered educational activities whereby the experience can be modified to address specific learning styles (Lumpkin et al., 2015).

The incorporation of social media allows for follow-up questions and a-synchronous discussions of lecture components of a course. As George et al. (2013) explain, "Tools used in [to] facilitate peer-to-peer and peer-to-lecturer engagement, [provide] students with control over the content and flow of the lecture, and enable space for sensitive and probing questions" (p. 987). Allowing students the opportunity to review, play back and reflect on course content reinforces the information and enhances the learning process.

Statement of the Problem

English composition at many universities, is an "an introduction to and concentration on the basic communication skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening." (p. 27, New Jersey City University, 2014). What are the basic communication skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in the 21st century? What role does digital literacy play in the English composition

classroom? What opportunities do digital communication tools and educational technologies provide for students and faculty today?

Purpose

The purpose of the quantitative research study is to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of social media integration in college-level creative writing courses based on engagement and student outcomes. This study also aims to explore how social media is effective for 21st century learners. Four class sections of a college-level creative writing course which integrates social media into lessons are being compared to four class sections of a college-level creative writing course which does not incorporate social media into learning activities. The results of this comparative study will provide the level of effectiveness of social media learning activities in college-level creative writing courses.

Research Questions

The following research questions aim to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of social media implementation in college-level creative writing courses based on engagement and student outcomes and address how effective the integration for social media is for 21st century learners:

(1) How does the use of social media platforms in college-level writing courses relate to student outcomes?

(2) How does the integration of social media learning activities differ from traditional classroom discussion in terms of student engagement in college-level writing courses?

(3) How is the integration of social media platforms engaging for 21st-century learners in college-level writing courses?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

There has been little research on the utilization of social media platforms to enhance college-level writing courses. As the adoption of social media tools in education increases, it is incumbent upon educators to learn about the impacts of the availability of these tools in their courses. According to King (2015), as of January of 2015, fifty-seven percent of American adults use Facebook in their daily lives while seventy-three percent of American teens (ages 12-17 years of age) are using Facebook (King, D.L., 2015, p. 6). For those Americans that are not utilizing social media, many still have access to these tools at the ready. King (2015) states that among American adults in 2015, "87 percent use the web, 68 percent connect to the web with mobile devices, 90 percent own a cell phone and 58 percent own a smartphone1" (King, D.L., 2015, p. 6).

Web 2.0 technologies, specifically social media, provide students with opportunities to enhance their academic experience by providing additional possibilities to interact with their peers, their instructors, and authentic audiences outside of the classroom. Student outcomes are improved with these additional opportunities for collaboration and support (Piotrowski, 2015).

Thorough Review of Relevant Studies and Theory

Research on the utilization of social media platforms to enhance college-level writing courses is limited. A review of existing must be reviewed in order to produce additional research in order to find additional data on the effectiveness of social media integration into college-level writing courses. Existing studies have found positive and negative effects of social media learning activities.

The student population tends to not have a sense of what effective-written work is or how they should go about composing college-level written work. Social media provides examples to

students on proper and improper writing skills. When teaching students about introductory paragraphs, teachers can utilize Facebook posts which promote online content. For example, "In class, offer examples of Facebook posts promoting content from magazines and websites. Ask students to analyze the headlines and subheadings. If they had to promote their essay online, how would they get their point across in one sentence? How would they entice readers to click?" (Gooblar, D., 2018, para. 13).

College courses have seen structural changes in recent years as educational technologies became available. Over the past decade, "many f2f composition instructors have shifted their curriculum to attend to multimodal literacies" (Bourelle et al., 2017). Even when social media is not the focus of the course, "social media dissemination of public writing" is a fact that probably deserves our focus in composition classrooms (Warren-Riley et al., 2017).

Today's students are experienced in many discourses – blogging, texting, posting to social networking sites, and generally using language in many different ways (Wardle et al., 2011). The "creation, consumption, and circulation of public digital media" is dependent on "an array of literacies, literacies that we can and should cultivate in our classrooms" (Warren-Riley et. al., 2017). Multimodal assignments bring the academic focus, rigor, and critical thinking to these discourses.

Educational technologies allow faculty to engage students with class material using interactive tools and to facilitate multimodal literacy. This advancement also allows instructors to participate in student-centered educational activities in which the experience is modified to address specific learning styles (Lumpkin et al., 2015).

Active learning has also come to be an integral part of effective college-level courses. Students' active participation in the learning community typically results in positive student

outcomes (Romanov & Nevgi, 2007). Incorporation of active learning strategies, particularly in web-enhanced classes, has proven to positively affect the student experience. Social media integration into college-level courses, allows for opportunities for heightened student interest, greater group collaboration (MacDonald, 2005), and public participation and deliberation within writing studies (McVey and Woods, 2016; Parks, 2012; Portman-Daley, 2010).

King Abdul-Aziz University studies a sample of 510 students, 79% have a positive attitude towards courses utilizing social media platforms to support learning. Among the social media tools most frequently used by the students in this study were: WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia and Facebook (Aifan, 2015, p. 201). The study also found that instructors at the university need to integrate these tools more and adapt social media effectively in order to help students with their formal learning experiences as well as the informal learning experiences (Aifan, 2015, p. 195). The study also found the instructors of the university require faculty development opportunities in order to increase the adoption of social media platforms for learning activities and to provide information on effective utilization of the technologies (Aifan, 2015, p. 196).

A research study, involving 169 faculty members from four different universities, examined the adoption of social media tools and how they feel the tools affect learning environments. Eighty-eight percent of the participants found social media integration was valuable in the courses while, forty-four percent had academic integrity concerns with the integration and twelve percent believed that the time necessary to learn the social media application made it difficult to adopt said technologies (Smith, 2014, p. i).

A research study evaluated the effect of learning outcomes when social media is utilized as a collaborative learning tool. The study, comprised of 242 students from Swinburne

University, involved an "online etiquette" learning module before the students were provided

with the social media infused learning activities (Dia, et. al, 2017, p. 40). This ensured that

students applied the appropriate communication methods and rhetoric during the study. Upon

completion of the social media activities, students were provided with a post-activity survey to

measure the effectiveness of the learning activity. Ninety percent of the respondents agreed that

they had a better understanding of the content linked to the social media activity (Dia, et. al,

2017, p. 41). Dia, et. al. (2017) explain that students who are provided with social media-based

activities have indirect impacts including:

- Creating interest in conducting research and undertaking further studies in the

  field

- Opening of job opportunities for students through their interaction with the

  industry professionals

- Creating new research ideas

- Helping staff to learn more about students' level of understanding and level of

  interest in the topics taught in the units. (p. 42)

The aforementioned implications provide educators with important information on how lessons

can be redesigned in order to produce improved student outcomes, retention and success.

    Research was conducted at a community college in Texas where 200 nursing students

were surveyed to determine ethical and unethical practices taking place in social media

environments. The study determined that unethical behavior, such as taking part in conversations

on Facebook about patients and patient records, is a common occurrence (Smith, 2014, p. 86).

This result uncovers a need for training and further discussions on unethical behaviors among

students and interns on social media.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter is related to the process and results of implementing social media learning activities in college-level creative writing courses. Additionally, an overview is provided on current social media adoption rates among American adults. Changes in how college courses are structured, due to the emergence of new and updated educational technologies, is summarized. The next chapter will cover the methodology used to evaluate the effectiveness of social media integration in college-level create writing courses based on learning outcomes and student engagement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Social media platforms are becoming a popular forum for collaboration among American adults (King, D.L., 2015). As noted in the reviewed literature, social media is being used to enhance the learning experience for students in college-level courses. Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of social media learning activities in college-level writing courses. The purpose of this quantitative study is to analyze the effect of social media learning activities in college-level writing courses based on learning outcomes and engagement.

This research study implemented a pre- and post-test and survey research design. One group of students who participated in the study were enrolled in a traditional face-to-face college-level writing course without a social media learning activity component and another group of students were enrolled in a web-enhanced face-to-face college-level writing course with a social media learning activity. The research questions addressed in this research study are:

(1) How does the use of social media platforms in college-level writing courses relate to student outcomes in said courses?

(2) How does the integration of social media learning activities differ from traditional classroom discussion in terms of student engagement in college-level writing courses?

(3) How is the integration of social media platforms engaging for 21st-century learners in college-level writing courses?

This chapter will provide information on the research design, population of the individuals evaluated in the study, the instruments used in the study and the procedures that were followed throughout the duration of the study.

Research Design

An experimental design was utilized in this quantitative research design in order to examine the effectiveness of social media learning activities in college-level writing courses. Specifically, this study used a quasi-experimental design whereby the researcher used groups that already existed in the situation that was researched. In this design, the researcher assigned groups; this was not done randomly since these groups cannot be created outside of the scenario. The researcher also applied pre- and post-test design (Creswell, 2015, p. 310). A quantitative study was used for this research as it was appropriate to do so in order to analyze pre- and post-test learning outcomes and survey data. Student learning outcomes was compared to student survey results to determine the effectiveness of social media learning activities in college-level writing courses.

Population and Sample

The population of the research study consisted of college-level students enrolled in four Creative Writing courses at New Jersey City University. Two faculty members agreed to participate in the study; one faculty member facilitated the control group and the other faculty member facilitated the experimental group. Each course had an enrollment of 20 students which made the sample size of the study equal 80. There is not a control for the age, sex or race of the student sample as the university randomly assigned the students to individual writing courses. The sample of 80 students consisted of first and second-year college students. Some students had declared majors of varying disciplines some students had not yet declared majors. The study was conducted over a period of 15 weeks in order to acquire the necessary pre-test, post-test and survey data throughout the duration of the semester.

An experimental group, consisting of 40 students, were enrollees of a traditional, face-to-face writing course with a social media learning activity component. A control group, consisting of 40 students, were enrolled in a traditional, face-to-face writing course without a social media learning activity component. A study of the acquired data and varying course activities completed within the experimental and control groups determined the effectiveness of the implementation of social media activities within college-level writing courses.

Instruments

In order to collect data for this research study, an existing pre-assessment (see Appendix A) and an existing post-assessment (see Appendix B) was used and evaluated by the facilitator of the assessments based on the provided grading rubric (see Appendix C). In the experimental group, students completed the pre- and post-assessments within a social media platform where their postings are subject to feedback from individuals outside of their course. Upon completion of the post-assessment, students in the experimental group completed an existing survey (see Appendix E). The survey is comprised of Likert scale questions and one closed-ended, multiple choice type question. Open-ended questions and personalized reflection responses were not included in this study.

The control group completed the pre- and post-assessment by submitting their completed assessment directly to the course facilitator. Upon completion of the post-assessment, students in the control group completed an existing survey (see Appendix G). The survey is comprised of Likert scale questions. Open-ended questions and personalized reflection responses were not included in this study.

Permission for utilization of the existing pre- and post-assessments was granted by Ms. Carota (see Appendix D). Permission was granted for the utilization of the existing survey which

was developed by a researcher, Dr. Aifan (see Appendix F). Permission was granted for the utilization of the existing "General Student Engagement" survey which was developed by Mr. John Hitchcock (see Appendix H).

The evaluation of student outcomes from the completed rubric (Appendix C) and the survey results (Appendices E and H) provide evidence to educators and administration of the effectiveness of social media activities in college-level writing courses. These results will guide professional development facilitators on what training is necessary for implementing social media into writing courses. The results will also provide data on the effectiveness of utilizing social media in college-level writing courses.

Procedures

The researcher of this study applied for and received permission from New Jersey City University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for permission to conduct this research. As required and explained in the IRB application, a description of the research study was sent to the participants of the study. After review of the synopsis, participants (including faculty and students) submitted completed consent forms to the researcher and the study began immediately.

The facilitator of the control group of 40 students was provided with a pre-assessment and rubric and was distributed to and completed by the students at the beginning of the semester. This pre-assessment was administered in a traditional face-to-face format whereby students submitted the pre-assessment (Appendix A) to the professor in a document form (by paper or electronically). The assessment was graded based on the rubric provided to the instructor (Appendix C). This provided a baseline of student learning outcomes data. After the course delivered the creative writing lessons throughout the semester, students completed the post-assessment (Appendix B) and graded with the provided rubric (Appendix C). Upon completion

of the post-assessment, the students in the control group completed a survey (Appendix G) to review their student engagement experiences during the writing course.

The facilitator of the experimental group of 40 students was provided with a pre-assessment and rubric and was distributed to and completed by the students at the beginning of the semester. This pre-assessment (Appendix A) was administered in an online format on a social media platform whereby students were subject to feedback from peers, classmates and other individuals on the social media network. This provided a baseline of student learning outcomes data. The assessment was graded based on the rubric provided to the instructor (Appendix C). After the course completed the creative writing lessons throughout the semester, students completed the post-assessment (Appendix B) in an online format on a social media platform and graded with the provided rubric (Appendix C). Upon completion of the post-assessment, the students in the experimental group completed a survey (Appendix E) to review their experiences utilizing the social media learning activities.

Data from the pre- and post-assessments were compiled and compared to each other groups (control and experimental). Additionally, results from the surveys were collected and analyzed with the assessment results. With the results from the assessment learning outcomes and survey results, the researcher was able to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the use of social media platforms in college-level writing courses relate to student outcomes in said courses?

2. How does the integration of social media learning activities differ from traditional classroom discussion in terms of student engagement in college-level writing courses?

3. How is the integration of social media platforms engaging for 21st-century learners in college-level writing courses?

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Appendix A

Imagine that something precious you have lost is returned to you. *Write a story exploring this idea.* **Your piece must be CREATIVE.**
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/secondary/creativewritingpractice.doc

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Appendix B

Choose a specific event or moment in your life and fully explore it to compose your own memoir. We will explore memoir samples and brainstorm ideas as you create your own story.

https://mscarota.weebly.com/creative-writing-assignments.html

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Appendix C

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Message	Clear and compelling central message crafted with strong awareness of audience and purpose. Message is grounded in concrete language and examples.	Clear central message crafted with general awareness of audience and purpose. Message is grounded in some concrete language and examples.	Vague evidence of a central message with inconsistent awareness of audience and purpose. Message, language, or examples may be overly abstract.	Little or no evidence of a central message with minimal awareness of audience and purpose. Few, if any, concrete examples.
Organization	All organizational strategies and structures work effectively to convey intended message to the reader.	Most organizational strategies and structures work to convey intended message to the reader.	Some organizational strategies and structures work to convey intended message to the reader.	Few or no organizational strategies and structures work to convey intended message to the reader.
Originality	Keeps reader engaged from beginning to end through original and interesting use of ideas, language, plot, character development, dialogue, imagery, etc.	Engages reader most of the way through the piece through mostly original and interesting use of ideas, language, plot, character development, imagery, etc.	Offers little originality in ideas, language, plot, imagery, etc. Reader may lose interest.	Lacks originality in ideas, language, plot, imagery, etc. Reader will not get past first few sentences or lines.
Clarity	Although challenging and perhaps not easily understood, work has a clarity that leaves no surface questions (i.e. "What happened in this part?") in reader's mind.	Has a clarity that leaves few surface questions (i.e. "What happened in this part?") in reader's mind.	Leaves several surface questions (i.e. "Why is the character named Myrtle on page 1 and Jill on page 4?") in reader's mind.	Is downright murky because of significant and unintentional gaps or contradictions in logic, plot, character, imagery, voice, point of view, setting, etc.
Conventions	Thorough control of sentence formation. Few errors, if any, are present in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation, but the errors that are present do not interfere with meaning.	Adequate control of sentence formation. Some errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation, but few, if any, of the errors that are present may interfere with meaning.	Limited and/or inconsistent control of sentence formation. Some sentences may be awkward or fragmented. Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation and some of those errors may interfere with meaning.	Minimal control of sentence formation. Many sentences are awkward and fragmented. Many errors may be present in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation, and many of those errors may interfere with meaning.

Appendix D

March 15, 2018

Ms. Carota
Patchogue-Medford High School
181 Buffalo Ave, Medford, NY 11763

Dear Ms. Carota,

My name is Daniel Ward and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Technology Leadership program at New Jersey City University. The purpose of my study is to analyze the effectiveness of integrating social media tools in college-level writing courses. I came upon your attached creative writing courses on your website. These learning activities would be a great help in developing data for my research. Would you grant me permission to use your learning activities for my research project?

I appreciate your anticipated response.

Sincerely,
Daniel Ward
NJCU
dwardnjcu@gmail.com

Appendix E

1) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Rate the statements with the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
I like to use social media for learning purposes.					
Social media are important because they support my learning.					
In my opinion, using social media to support learning is a good idea.					
I find learning online using social media enjoyable.					
Using social media for learning is very desirable for me.					
I like to engage myself with my classmates in collaborative projects using social media.					
Communicating with my classmates and instructors using social media is a good					

learning experience.					
I prefer attending a class where the instructor is using social media in his/her teaching.					
Once I started using social media to support my learning, I found it difficult to stop.					

2) Throughout the course, my attitude toward using social media for learning has _____.
   a. Become significantly more positive.
   b. Become slightly more positive.
   c. Remained the same
   d. Become slightly more negative.
   e. Become significantly more negative.

3) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Rate the statements with the following scale:

   1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
I find social media easy to use to support my learning.					
I find it takes a lot of effort to become skillful at using social media for learning purposes.					
I find it is easy to navigate through social media windows.					
I find it is easy to post my					

profile and class projects on the Internet using social media.					
Interacting and using social media to support learning requires a lot of mental effort.					
My interaction with social media tools and using them for learning purposes is clear and understandable.					

4) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Rate the statements with the following scale:

1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
I find many educational resources, links, programs, and topics of discussion when using social media					
Social media motivate me to learn better than traditional methods of teaching.					
My writing skills develop as I communicate with others					

using social media.					
Watching videos on social media develops my listening skills.					
Social media provide me with applications and programs that help me to be more creative in my course projects and assignments.					
Debating ideas and exchanging opinions with others through social media enhances my critical thinking skills.					
Learning through the Internet using social media reinforces the self-independent learning for me.					
I express my opinions and thoughts more freely with social media than in face-to-face discussions with my instructors and classmates in the classroom.					

Social media help me to learn collaboratively with those who have similar interests.					
I can learn anytime and anywhere using social media.					
Communicating and interacting with my classmates and instructors through social media helps me to improve my social skills					
Overall, using social media for learning purposes improves my academic performance.					

Appendix F

March 15, 2018

Hanan Ahmad Aifan
King Abdu-Aziz University
Jeddah

Dear Dr. Aifan,

My name is Daniel Ward and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Technology Leadership program at New Jersey City University. The purpose of my study is to analyze the effectiveness of integrating social media tools in college-level writing courses. I came upon your attached survey used in your dissertation titled "Saudi Students' Attitudes Toward Using Social Media to Support Learning." This survey would be a great help in collecting data for my research. Would you grant me permission to use your survey for my research project?

I appreciate your anticipated response.

Sincerely,
Daniel Ward
NJCU
dwardnjcu@gmail.com

Appendix G

1) In your writing class, how often did you do the following? Rate the statements with the following scale:

1=Rarely/Never; 2= Sometimes; 3= Often; 4= Very Often;

	1	2	3	4
Ask questions in class or contributed to class discussions.				
Include diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments in class.				
Come to class without having completed assignments.				
Work with other students on projects during class.				
Work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments/projects.				
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions.				
Tutor or teach other students in class.				
Use an electronic medium (list-serv, social media, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete				

an assignment for class.				
Use email, website, or social media to communicate with the instructor.				
Discuss grades or assignments with the teacher of this class.				
Discuss ideas from class with other outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)				
Participate in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of your class.				
Discuss ideas from your classes with your teacher outside of class.				

Appendix H

March 15, 2018

John Hitchcock
Center for Evaluation & Education Policy
Indiana University Bloomington

Dear Mr. Hitchcock,

My name is Daniel Ward and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Technology Leadership program at New Jersey City University. The purpose of my study is to analyze the effectiveness of integrating social media tools in college-level writing courses. I came upon your attached survey titled "General Student Engagement Survey." This survey would be a great help in collecting data for my research. Would you grant me permission to use your survey for my research project?

I appreciate your anticipated response.

Sincerely,
Daniel Ward
NJCU
dwardnjcu@gmail.com