A social media for teaching framework: Post PhD thoughts

Dr. RyanThomas Williams

Teesside University, Middlesbrough, England

Corresponding author; Email: Ryan.williams@tees.ac.uk

ABSTRACT: Throughout the triangulation approach of my PhD thesis whereby literature supported methodologies across qualitative and quantitative work, key themes were firmly established. It is these themes that give precedence to using social media to transform pedagogy in meaningful ways. The SAMR model describes the application of technology to substitute and augment certain tasks.These are viewed as an 'enhancement' to a particular activity with limited tension, however, this study does evidence tension occurring at this stage. The simple substitution of task that subsequently completed using iPads is not revealing innovative pedagogy. Whilst the SAMR model outlines the modification and redefinition of pedagogical tasks through technological transformative pedagogy with technology is nonetheless a challenge, as it is within this stage that teachers can benefit from technology by creating new tasks that were previously inconceivable. Moreover,I argued that transformative technologies can enhance emotional well-being by producing positive changes in the human technological experience.

Keywords: Social Media, Teaching Framework, E-Learning, Twitter

INTRODUCTION

The research in this PhD has now reached a point of data saturation, and as the research on Technology Enabled Learning (TEL) is so relevant to the pedagogy that has occurred during the global pandemic, I have now decided to submit this thesis for formal examination. Social media and social networking sites have become popular across almost all industries including enterprise, governments and non-profit. Nevertheless, education has seen some pushback in discussions around how social media may be incorporated into pedagogy successfully. The present thesis examined the current relationship between networking sites and pedagogy, distinguished factors that influence teacher engagement with these tools, and determined whether social media may impact student engagement and academic performance. The study was underpinned by Trowler's (2008) socio-cultural theory and adopted a mixed methods approach using a three-phase data collection process, whereby surveys were conducted in phase 1, interviews undertaken in phase 2, and phase 3. In total 434 participants took part in the study, of which all were active teachers with QTS working within the secondary phase. Findings revealed that TEL CPD is severally underdeveloped across most U.K schools with little

evidence of transformative professional development. (Aileen Kennedy's 2005; 2014). Additionally, the study identified that the term TEL may in fact be problematic as it groups too many types of technology that range from substituting tasks to transforming teaching in meaningful ways. Furthermore, there was evidence of a lack of thought towards technology in education policy making. The study also revealed that the personal and professional in social media ought to distinguished. The study's four major themes illuminate the challenges involved with successfully embedding technology in education, and in particular social media.
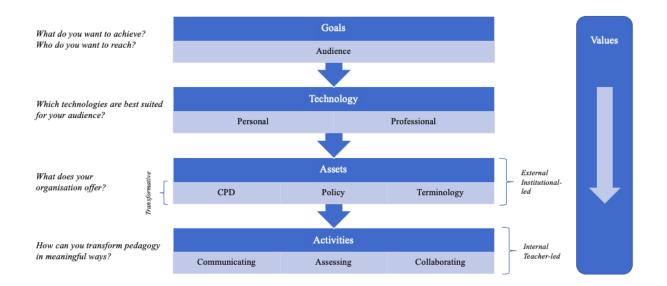
A social media for teaching framework

Figure 1. A framework describing the main themes from this study

Discussion

The framework describes four main stages or decisions that educators must make in order to successfully integrate social media into their pedagogy. These stages also hold significance in wider discussions of education technology as the themes have emerged using TEL models. The first is the establishing of goals, and this is the point where professionals will explore their primary objectives to using social media in this context. An educator may set meaningful social goals, and this may range from enhanced interaction with a resource into increasingly deeper learning through assessment. In the phase 1 results of the study, teachers agreed that social media can be a tool that enhances engagement and improves the achievement of learning in the classroom. Therefore, the goals that are associated with engagement and learning are as relevant as the networking objectives that may be set when communicating with colleagues or industry leaders. In order to ensure that the goals are increasingly specific, the audience ought to be identified early in any education technology strategy. This is primarily because there are distinct differences in the types of users, and this has been reflected within this study. As an example, many participants engage with colleagues and educators from different establishments on platforms such as Twitter. The benefits of this were explored throughout

phase 2 of the data collection whereby participants described the importance of having a social community where professional ideas could be shared. The study also evidences that different audiences reflect different goals, and it is these distinctions that ought to be considered during any planning of pedagogical tasks.

Once specific goals that include the intended audience have been identified, the educator must make decisions around the most suitable and appropriate technology to use. This study found that YouTube was the most popular SNS to use with pupils at the secondary level, however Twitter was increasingly popular in developing a community to share ideas and resources. Twitter empowers individuals to engage with fellow educators from around the world, breaking down traditional barriers such as global geography and societal hierarchies. The role of a platform such as Twitter has accelerated debates on how it can be best used to promote teaching and learning, and this is therefore. There are other technologies that may be most appropriately used with students that have a disability (see Weible 2018 accessibility and assistive technology distinctions) Social media platforms and other technological advancements that are popular with the general population would generally be considered 'personal' in this framework. In the study, teachers were primarily concerned with their online safety and were resentful of the prospect of even some of their personal details being shared with students. Professional platforms are online platforms that have been specifically designed for the purpose of teaching and learning; examples include Google Classroom and Seesaw. Teachers welcomed the use of these types of social platforms for their programmes. Beyond social media, there are other technologies that have been designed specifically for learning, as with IWBs, LMS, and VLEs. The advantage of informed practice through educational agendas is the inclusion of the functionality intended for teaching and learning, and this has the potential to become more inclusive. Teachers were pleased with some of the additional functionality they had such as the ability to include parents as a safety-net for cyberbullying, the ability to approve posts, and easily breaking out into working groups online. Some platforms that the general population use have some of the above features, however they are limited as it differentiates from their primary goal of 'building a social community for us all' (Zuckerberg 2017). Outside of education or social work, there is no need to give access to your parents on your technological devices, for example.

Phase 3 indicated that there were essentially places where adults meet online, in other words, Twitter and Facebook, and places where children do is the same, in other words via TikTok and Snapchat. Marketing data also supports this, as eMarketer (2018) reported that in the age bracket up to 24 years of age, 90.5% use Snapchat, whereas only 46.9% use Twitter. When compared to this study, 77.04% use Twitter which evidences the importance of establishing audiences and selecting an appropriate social platform or technology. The importance of establishing an alternative educational specific platform for teaching and learning is no more apparent than in this study. Social media in the personal and the professional ought to be distinguished. The notable exception is YouTube where teachers use this form of technology to search for demonstrations of science experiments. YouTube is a video streaming service owned by Google with over 2 billion users and content videos. The platform's primary source of revenue is advertising, making it a global online video giant albeit with concerns around what adverts will be shown at the time of streaming to students. Within education, there does not appear to be a comparable platform that can provide significant content at a free cost. Some educators referenced ClickView; however, its business model is reliant on schools' subscription charges, and it does not contain the million hours of videos that are uploaded every day. In other words, YouTube is free to use, does not contain personal details about the teacher, and links to

pedagogy increasingly more than any commercial competitor. I argue that this is not centralised to social media and does have meaningful implications across the wider TEL spectrum, as with personal computers and tablets.

From therein, the educator must make best use of their 'assets'. Assets is a term that is traditionally associated with business and marketing terminology; however, the definition is broad in the sense of describing a 'resource' or something that is of 'value to an individual. Additionally, assets as a term has been used in studies involving young people and society. Development assets are used to explore the importance of schools, support environments and values. In this context, professional development, school policy and consistent use of terminology would be of extreme value to the educator through a foundational sense of empowerment, purpose, worth and promise. The framework's assets are consistent with the study's key themes and these have been discussed in this chapter. The framework also highlights that these are 'external' or 'instructional led'. This is not to suggest that teachers are not proactively involved in the process of developing transformative CPD, or changing culture within schools, rather that responsibility ought to lay with the institute. It would be unfair to expect a teacher to use social media or mobile phones in their teaching if school policy does not permit it.

Similarly, it is the school's responsibility to provide professional development that is valued by teachers, including a focus on pedagogical strategies that links to technology over the technology itself. Many teachers in this study were not involved in the planning of CPD in TEL and this responsibility rests with the SLT. This study consisted of data collection in secondary settings and thus, assets have been relayed with reference to these themes. Nevertheless, teachers may look beyond the three assets presented in this framework and at alternative opportunities the organisation offers.

This study has explored the reasons why CPD in TEL is underdeveloped, hence the importance of transformative CPD, that is a combination of practices that centre around educational change (Kennedy 2005). Transformative CPD addresses issues around communities of practice and considers the relationship technology has with content and pedagogy. It can be argued that training that is highly appreciative of 'how' social media or other TEL can be used in pedagogical purposes through 'double dip' methods or others that consider it in the pedagogical context is a valuable asset for a teacher. Additionally, I have included terminology as this was one of the study's major themes. In essence, the term TEL may be problematic as generalisations do not consider personal, social, or cultural complexities. It can be argued that this is overly generalising social media as a tool for teaching with other technology such as iPads, and that this is generating tension in educational communities. Being an expert in using iPads is not the same as using social media effectively, and it can be argued that if schools and school leaders recognise the complications around generalising terms such as TEL, an increasingly productive pedagogical environment can be developed.

In general, teachers are responsible for initiating, planning and executing pedagogical tasks that involve technology, thus, it is important that they are part of the phase that can be described as developing meaningful pedagogical 'activities'. At this point, teachers must consider how they can transform pedagogy in meaningful ways using technology. Tang and Hew's (2017) framework on the meaningful incorporation of social media into pedagogy includes categories such as representation, communication, collaboration, administration, reflection and assessment. This framework distinguishes between those that are external and instructional led and those that are internal, and teacher led. The purpose of this is to highlight the assets or resources that teachers have autonomy

over, whilst illustrating actions policy makers ought to consider. In contrast, Tang and Hew's (2017) framework does not consider the importance of goals, domains, CPD or policy. There is also limited distinctions between those categories that are pedagogical led and those that are concerned with other parts of teaching and learning, in addition to rejecting ideas of stages/prerequisites. Nevertheless, the inclusion of collaboration, communication, and assessment as ways to transform pedagogy were themes that arose throughout all phases of data collection, and thus, Tang and Hew's (2017) framework has inspired this final part.

Collaborating with peers extends to discussions to ensure students remain informed; it is heavily characterized by constructivist approaches and echoed in principles of behaviourism. Participation through collaboration can provide ownership of an individual's learning (see Trowler 2008). Collaboration and teamwork are common engagements that students operate in; hence, numerous studies have explored collaboration through online platforms and digital technologies. Moreover, collaboration is evident amongst teachers working in TEL to generate further inclusivity or productive working groups. Collaborating by creating a social community was viewed as the second most important aspect by teachers, and this remains one of the primary purposes of using social media to ensure that learning goes 'beyond the traditional four walls of the classroom'. This was evidenced throughout the global pandemic where teachers were tasked with engaging students via remote settings. Platforms such as Google Classroom, and Seesaw allowed for collaborating and continuation of study under unique circumstances.

Furthermore, teachers expressed their concern that assessment for learning was rarely considered when platforms were chosen ahead of the U.K. national lockdown. Teachers described the importance of being able to 'live' mark, as well as quickly yet accurately providing feedback on tasks. Hence, the significance of including assessment as part of pedagogy. Interestingly, in phase 1 of the research, the teachers made distinctions between assignments and pedagogy, however, this was further explored in the subsequent phases where teachers gave examples of failures with regards to assessment for learning in technology. This was possibly because the teachers associate terms such as 'exams' or 'assignments' with Ofsted. In fact, continuous and live assessing of students holds much pedagogical value. As described by the teachers, it is moderately 'easy' for teachers in the classroom to assess as they are able to walk around, speak with the students, and view formative assessment as it is happening. It seems that tension can occur when the assessments are moved online or integrated with technology, and with reference to the SAMR model, it is the equivalent assessments that are directly substituted or augmented online that present complexities. Rather than having a culture of perpetuating the same ways of assessment, technology should be used to transform assessment. There were few examples of technology being used to transform assessments in this PhD work.

There is little thought on which technologies best suit assessment, and this is the professional responsibility of the school leaders. Unfortunately, despite the attempts being made to ensure that learning is not disrupted for the students, there were examples of schools that had overlooked important pedagogical considerations such as assessment. This finding has been discussed earlier in the chapter, and a prominent example can be seen with teachers who needed to maintain multiple tabs open whilst using multiple clicks to view a student's work from one day to the next. This is significantly more disruptive than the same task completed without technology (i.e., with traditional books). Once again this reveals some of the challenges that exist in applying technology to pedagogy successfully.

Through the lens of Trowler's (2008) socio-cultural theory, social interactions and communication are considered to be fundamental requirements for learning. Social dialogue whether generated online or face to face is at the heart of the everyday interaction of many modern-day individuals. In many ways by not acknowledging how students communicate in contemporary ways, there is a disconnect with the world of employment, as many employers require their workforce to be digitally aware and social media savvy. There are a wide range of communication strategies that are associated with social platforms, such as live chat, a chronological timeline, private groups, and reflective posts (The Economist 2021). Other technologies also allow for live updates or notifications to parents as with Dojos.

Similarly, these are features that the business world have adopted to enhance an increasingly modern customer relationship. It is these strategies that educators must consider in using social media as the importance of using the most appropriate method should not be underestimated.

In a study by Vasek and Hendricks (2016), it is revealed that communication between teachers and students resembles a 'peer to peer' relationship, and that there are both positive and negative implications of this pedagogical relationship. In this PhD, I have developed Vasek and Hendricks' (2016) work by reflecting on the theory of social constructivism and Trowler's (2008) socio-cultural theory, and this is referenced through 'transformative CPD' and example activities of communicating and collaborating. These values run throughout the framework, and it is particularly relevant due to the social elements of social media and social networking services. The concept that social interactions are important for learning links into ideas around communities for professional learning and communities of practice. Constructivism is underpinned in personalised learning and removed from the 'one size fits all' approach, and this has become increasingly popular in educational literature that is prominent throughout this research. Social media along with other TEL products can certainly contribute to personalised learning through communication tools, individual working spaces, security, and learning management tools. When associated with CPD for teachers, the personalised approach is described in transformative models (Kennedy 2005). This study illuminates the extent to which VLEs, and other social platforms have been characterised by constructivist approaches so that their primary use is to collaborate, extend discussions, and keep students informed. These characteristics are echoed in principles of constructivism and behaviourism. Furthermore, Trowler (2008) addressed issues of CPD and explored social interactions with tools to facilitate 21st century learning. Concepts around a rebalancing of social contexts in teaching and learning is present throughout this study, hence the relevance of the work of Trowler (2008). This value laden philosophy is embedded throughout goals, domains, assets, and activities, and thus should be adopted in social media in pedagogical strategies and frameworks.

Conclusion

This framework has been developed to not only provide some insight into some of the most complex aspects of adopting social media in pedagogical tasks, but challenges in TEL generally. Its structure has grown throughout the data collection phases and has been generated from the key themes that arose in this study.

It is a development of previous pedagogical frameworks such as Tang and Hew (2017), as well as in the work of Kennedy's (2005;2014). Kennedy (2005) argues that CPD ought to generate transformative professional development, and this also links to Trowler's (2008) socio-cultural theory. In other words,

the key findings from this triangulation approach are best presented in the structure described in Figure 1.

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