INTEGRATING INSTAGRAM IN LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR TERTIARY BLENDED LEARNING COURSE: A CASE OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) encourages lecturers in applying Blended Learning as one of the delivery methods in teaching and learning processes. The university also has introduced ‘Week Without Walls’, an initiative whereby students will gather online and form study groups to create their own learning methods to study more efficiently with their peers. In this case study, the enhancement of learning process by social media with Instagram for the Plant Propagation Course at the tertiary level in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Sarawak Branch was investigated. The exploratory study used both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection. Qualitative approach involved in synthesizing the comments of 31 students and evaluated based on the SAMR model and the Bloom’s taxonomy of the educational objectives. The quantitative approach used a set of questionnaire with data collected via google form where the link was disseminated via social media platforms to all respondents. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The two segments of SAMR of enhancement and transformation were observed to be adopted by the students in line with Learning Outcomes of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia based on Boom Taxonomy. Although 85% of the respondents used Instagram in their social communication, only 29% strongly agreed and 43% agreed on using Instagram as a teaching/learning tool. The remaining 28% preferred the traditional face-to-face teaching/learning. The highlight of the group that supported using Instagram indicated that it could be freely used everywhere and anytime in preference to replacement classes. In addition, they were able to engage with all the course-mates outside of class more effectively as they could post their thoughts on the topics of other group assignments. The study confirmed the integrating Instagram in the learning strategies were accepted by majority of the students because of the benefits of flexibility and had provided a platform in learning which support the blended learning courses offered by higher education institution.
INTRODUCTION

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia started an initiative “Week without Walls” which means a week free from the normal classroom in campus with learning anywhere; learn anytime and learn from any device. Thus, students may study online, go global, go for field experience, be involved in service learning, assist community activities, learn from industry experts or any subject matter experts from other universities, learn from peers, and much more without being confined to the four walls of the classroom [1]. Instructors are to design the learning activities based on stipulated learning outcomes, monitor and facilitate learning which need to be assessed on the achievement of the outcomes whereby students take responsibility and complete their learning tasks. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia has listed eight learning outcomes in a programme delivery that consists: i. Knowledge; ii. Practical Skills; iii. Thinking and Scientific Skills; iv. Communication Skills, v. Social skills, Teamwork and Responsibilities; vi. Values, Ethics, Moral and Professionalism; vii. Information Management and Lifelong Learning and viii. Management and Entrepreneurship. According to engagement theory described by Kearsley and Shneiderman [2], engaged students learn at high levels, better grasp what they learn, and retain that knowledge. In this 21st century, Michael et al. [3] indicated that in the context of compulsory learning settings, engagement is key in online environments. UiTM encourages lecturers in applying Blended Learning as one of the delivery methods in teaching and learning processes. Instagram, a mobile application that allows users to capture and share images and videos with followers [4] is gaining popularity among the social media platform which has become widely used by students as it provides an instantaneous way to capture and share their life moments with friends [5]. It has also become popular among university students’ demographic from the ages of 19-25 years old [6]. According to Fitri Handayani [7], since it is common for students to have an account in their Instagram update every moment on their life, it is a good tool for teaching and learning with teachers being able to develop certain activity creativity. The use of Instagram as a tool in teaching and learning summarized by Chan et al. [8], is that it can provide contextualized visual information which can be used in educational setting like:
- virtual participative learning among communities;
- autonomous learning;
- establishing content generation;
- constructive learning;
- collaborating and sharing of learning;
providing authentic interactive learning environment.

The question arises then is, “How do we measure the use of Instagram as a teaching and learning tool? The SAMR Model for integrating technology into teaching, developed by Puentedura [9] with “SAMR”, an acronym that stands for Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition. Accordingly, the SAMR model provides a technique for moving through degrees of technology adoption to find more meaningful uses of technology in teaching and move away from simply using “tech for tech’s sake”. It consists of two segments: enhancement and transformation. The enhancement segment consists of two classifications: substitution and augmentation. Substitution refers to technology acting as a direct tool substitute with no functional change while augmentation is related to technology acting as a direct tool substitute with functional improvements. The transformation segment consists of two classifications: modification, and redefinition. Modification refers to technology which allows for significant task design, and redefinition pertains to technology which allows creation of new task, previously inconceivable. When SMAR model is aligned with Bloom’s taxonomy, the lower enhancement levels of Substitution and Augmentation equate with Bloom’s Remember, Understand and Apply lower order thinking skills while The higher enhancement levels of SAMR’s Modification and Redefinition equate with Bloom’s higher order thinking levels of Analyse, Evaluate and Create [10]. In Romrell [11], the defined mLearning as “learning that is personalized, situated, and connected through the use of a mobile device”, the SAMR model was used as a framework for evaluating mobile learning (mLearning) providing examples of activities from studies, that fell within each of the four classifications of the SAMR model. Therefore, a study investigated enhancement of learning process by social media with Instagram for the Plant Propagation Management Course and Nursery at the tertiary level in UiTM, Sarawak Branch from the students’ perspective.

METHODOLOGY

There were 31 undergraduates pursuing the Bachelor of Science in Plantation Technology and Management taking the course of Plant Propagation and Management. They were given group assignment on the topic on grafting and marcotting techniques of propagation. The students were provided with instructions to carry out the techniques and document the processes over a month in the Instagram. Throughout the period, every student had to follow with comments or seek clarifications from the group. This exercise was monitored by the lecturer. An exploratory study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection. The qualitative approached involved in the evaluation of students’ assignment using Instagram based on SAMR model and the Bloom Taxonomy of the education objectives and synthesizing the
comments of the 31 students. The quantitative approach used a set questionnaire with data collected via google form where the link was disseminated via social media platforms to all respondents. It included asking how many used Instagram as social communication. Two items were used to gauge the respondents’ perception on using Instagram as a teaching/learning tool including an open-ended question. Five items were on the perception of students on integrating Instagram on learning strategies for blended learning measured on a 5-Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The two items on opinion of the value of using Instagram for teaching and learning was determined. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The assignment of the students was assessed based on the SAMR model aligning to Bloom Taxonomy as shown in Figure 1. It shows that the learning outcome outlined by the Ministry of Education was complied.

| Assignment Task | Substitution | Augmentation | Modification | Redefinition |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Note Taking     | Notes done by students. | Incorporated interactive multimedia on the process of grafting and marcotting. | Students used Instagram for all notes. | Lecturers had access to all student’s notes. |
| Research        | Student used Safari or Chrome for reference and included link on research papers. | Students recorded using video and described their work. | Students received feedback and incorporate to help improve the quality | Students can shared their learning through collaboration. |
| Assessment      | Replaced hardcopy Assignment. | Lecturer provided immediate feedback and comments on areas how to solve different problems. | Students completed different topic problems with immediate amendments. | All students had access to others’ lecturer feedback on others’ work. |

Bloom Taxonomy

Figure 1. Students’ assignment assessment on topic on grafting and marcotting techniques of propagation based on SAMR model aligning to bloom taxonomy
It was found that only 85% of the respondents used Instagram in social communication. It was reported as early as 2015, Instagram was the most used SNS, followed by Snapchat and Facebook [12] and the eight most visited SNS worldwide by 2016 [13], and still continues to innovate by introducing new features. The two items to gauge the students’ use of Instagram in social communication was shown in Table I. It indicates that 71% of the respondent consented to using Instagram as a teaching or learning tool rather than using the traditional teaching approach as indicated by the 78% negative response.

TABLE I. STUDENT’S PERCEPTION ON INSTAGRAM AS A TEACHING/LEARNING TOOL

| No. | Description (31 Respondents)                                      | Yes | No  |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 1.  | Using Instagram as a teaching/learning tool                       | 71% | 29% |
| 2.  | Preferring the traditional face-to-face teaching/learning        | 29% | 78% |

Preference given by the respondent attributed to positive comments extracted. Lesson carried on via social platform gave positive vibes to the young generations nowadays. As Akakandelura and Walubita [14] noted that social media has become ubiquitous and almost inescapable, revolutionizing the way students communicate, interact and socialize which has become an integral part of their social and cultural fabric with university students and youth the largest users of these technologies. Another comment was that Instagram enabled better communication and collaboration among the students. It could be freely used everywhere and anytime since most lecturers had to cancel class for their outstation works or meetings and considered a preferable choice of replacing classes. Negative comments related to preference to traditional face-to-face teaching and learning as one respondent explaining, “I prefer face to face because I'm not a person who can easily understand when it's comes to sharing knowledge through media social. It's because I understand better when studied face to face”.

Table II shows the perception of students on integrating Instagram on learning strategies for blended learning.

There was an 100% agreement in learning from Instagram had been easy because everybody was already familiar with all of its functions. Majority agreed to strongly agreed that Instagram was a positive tool for teaching and learning as they recognized the benefits. This was also observed by Ayuni Akhiar [6] whose results demonstrated students’ high positive perceptions and views towards using Instagram in improving their writing skills, but moderate attitudes in the English Language.

In expressing the opinions on the value of using Instagram for teaching and learning, 71% consented that Instagram is for positive change in higher education. However, 29% only felt that Instagram was about collaborating, networking, sharing and generating knowledge and content. In the study of Akakandelura and Walubita [14], it was reported students were not that enthusiastic with the
initiative at first however they gradually welcomed the idea and were encouraged to be creative in completing their writing activities.

TABLE II: THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ON INTEGRATING INSTAGRAM ON LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR BLENDED LEARNING

| No. | Description                                                                                           | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------------|----------|
| 1.  | Learning from Instagram has been easy because I am already familiar with all its functions.          | 0 %            | 100 % | 0 %                         | 0 %      |
| 2.  | Using Instagram doing assignments positively affects the quality of my work.                         | 29 %           | 42 %  | 29 %                        | 0 %      |
| 3.  | I like using Instagram for engaging in group discussion because we do not have to meet face-to-face at everybody's convenient time. | 43 %           | 29 %  | 14 %                        | 14 %     |
| 4.  | I have been able to engage with all my course-mates outside of class more effectively as I can post my thoughts in Instagram on the topic of other group assignments. | 44 %           | 28 %  | 28 %                        | 0 %      |
| 5.  | I think that there is significant relationship between student's academic performance and Instagram adoption and use. | 43 %           | 43 %  | 14 %                        | 0 %      |

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirmed integrating Instagram in the learning strategies were accepted by majority of the students attributed to the benefits of flexibility of teaching and learning. SAMR Model aligned to Bloom Taxonomy assessment showed this approach fulfilled the requirement of the Ministry of Education of Malaysia in the learning outcomes. Instagram can be concluded that it is acceptable social media platform in learning which supports the blended learning courses offered by higher education institution.

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