
The impact of Social media and Applications on Autonomous learning: A case study in ASTU Special School
Thummim Asefa

Abstract:

This research thesis investigates how social media can be used for autonomous learning among ASTU Special High School students. The paper examines the prevalent application of social media in promoting autonomous education for students, depending on the context. To meet the purpose of this study, data was collected through a questionnaire, survey, interview, and documentation of high school students of ASTU Special. The responses of 119 students who were selected purposively and randomly were analyzed. The results revealed that exposing high school students to digitalized learning activities helps them develop strong curiosity and a passion for learning and strengthens their self-management capacity. The data findings assessed whether social media could be an effective tool for educational achievement concerning the educational use of social media in autonomous learning or destroying students' educational progression in learning. Therefore, this study provides useful remarks about high school students' relationship with social media platforms, and results show positive affordance. We surveyed the experience of students in utilizing social media to adopt autonomous learning processes. This study is considered useful for adopting an understanding of how social media facilitates the development of autonomous learning in ASTU Special high school students, which deserves investigation.

How does social media impact autonomous learning?

The ever-evolving social media has emerged as a highly useful way of exploring emerging discoveries and enhancing the level of interest in learning. It enables students to have a reach across the wider emerging technologies.

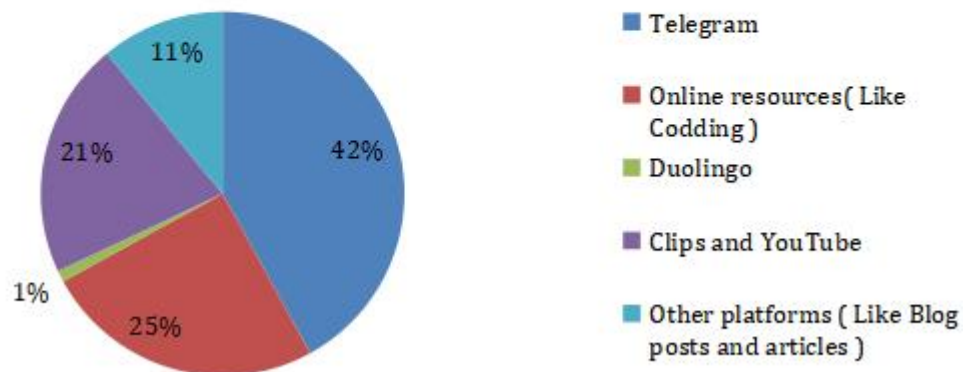
Social media is a term broadly used to describe any number of technological systems related to collaboration and community (Joosten, 2012). Social media networking sites, blogs, wikis, multimedia platforms, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds are among the applications typically included in recent illustrations (Barnes and Lescault, 2011, McEwan 2012). The social media platform is regarded as a place where students develop their skills and improve their understanding outside of formal education. The fact that learning is more structured in formal education gives students less freedom to enjoy the learning process. Matter of fact, students might develop some habits and strategies for learning in school. However, those habits can influence their learning style in the long learn if it lacks flexibility.

What is Learner Autonomy?

Henri Holec 1981: The autonomous learner has "the ability to take charge of [their] learning. In this research paper, I refer to autonomous learning as independent, self-directed, and self-regulated learning, since they support one another and hold similar meanings. Learner autonomy is about learners being more active in their learning process. Autonomous learners develop the skills and knowledge they want to acquire both inside and outside school. "Learner autonomy consists in becoming aware of, and identifying, one's strategies, needs, and goals as

a learner, and having the opportunity to reconsider and refashion approaches and procedures for optimal learning.” (Dimitrios Thanasoulas, 2000).

Figure 1: Pie chart showing results of a survey taken at Adama Science and Technology University Special School



The availability of online resources makes it easy for high school students to acquire new knowledge and skills they need to do well in exams. Students have noted social media is a great platform when it comes to independent learning. They also indicated that using social media for autonomous learning can be taken as using a library for self-regulated learning. Through the process, Students will find the freedom to pursue their independent learning, which in turn re-energizes the experience of education. We explore student’s views about the area of social media that makes a more positive contribution to them. These students were all high school students in 2015/16 EC. Gathering their responses makes it possible to provide detrimental information on to what extent social media made them grow more informed. Most of the students use social media to complete their school assignments. These students gave a specific experience by saying that it enabled them to research while they were preparing a certain presentation for class. Current senior students gave a specific example of how they have utilized social media to enhance their educational progression. They opted to use Telegram, a social networking platform, to stay updated and informed about school-related matters. Through this platform, teachers share a variety of resources and materials, For instance, PowerPoint slides, supplementary notes, and worksheets, and also notify students about any event or schedule, if necessary. Some read different posts and articles to upgrade their knowledge of the area they are interested in. Like, self-help, health-related, and found social media as a supplementary means of learning. Some other students highlight the importance of social media for self-taught language learning with social networking platforms like Duolingo, Clips, and YouTube. We found a very inspiring example among the students who gave a testament to the power of social media networking platforms for language-autonomous learning. With no formal language class or tutor, only relying on the diverse learning materials, she self-taught herself

Korean and achieved her language fluency. These students found search engines to have more direct applications for their autonomous learning.

Conclusion:

This study highlights the importance of social media in facilitating autonomous learning and the positive impact it has on students' overall learning experience. The use of social media in education can help students become more self-directed learners who are more active in their learning process. Social media can provide students with the opportunity to acquire new knowledge, skills, and information outside of the traditional learning environment. This can help to develop their curiosity and passion for learning, as well as their self-management capacity.

Through the analysis of the data collected from the survey, questionnaire, interview, and documentation of high school students of ASTU Special, the study identified that social media can be an effective tool for educational achievement. It provides students with a platform to engage in independent learning and self-regulated learning. Students can use social media to research, complete school assignments, and access resources that enhance their educational progression. Social media can be used in various ways to supplement students' learning, and its applications are not limited to language learning, but can also be used for self-help and health-related learning.

Despite the benefits of social media in facilitating autonomous learning, it is important to note that there are also negative consequences that come with its usage. The study acknowledges the importance of exploring the positive aspects of social media and gives a notion that it's not social media by its nature that hinders our learning process, but our usage determines whether we excel or fail in our learning experience.

In conclusion, this study provides useful insights into the relationship between high school students and social media platforms in the context of autonomous learning. It highlights the positive affordances of social media and its potential to enhance students' progression.

References:

- Endres, T., Leber, J., Böttger, C., Rovers, S., & Renkl, A. (2020). Improving Lifelong Learning by Fostering Students' Learning Strategies at University. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*.
- Joosten, T. (2012). *Social media for educators*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Barnes, K., & Lescault, A. M. (2011). *Digital natives: A myth debunked*. San Francisco, CA: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.
- McEwan, B. (2012). *The benefits of social networking services*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Dimitrios Thanasoulas. (2000). What is Learner Autonomy and How Can It Be Fostered? *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(11).

