The Impact Of Social Media On Education In Adult And Community Education And Training Classes In Pretoria

Reginald Botshabeng Monyai Department of Adult, Community and Continuing Education University of South Africa PO Box 392, Pretoria, 0001, monyarb@unisa.ac.za

Shamila Mooloo PhD Student: Department of Adult, Community and Continuing Education University of South Africa , shamsmooloo@vodamail.co.za

Abstract. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of social media technologies like WhatsApp as a teaching method to be used by lecturers in the Adult and Community Education and Training sector that enables collaborative learning to support students in achieving academic success. This research specifically concentrates on how the power of social media plays a pivotal role in learning and acquiring skills. This study is aligned with Mishra and Koehler's citation, that there is an interplay between pedagogy, content, and technology and the connections of these three domains for the adult educator (Reed, 2015).

The findings of this research discovered the barriers that affected academic success and how it has affected lecturers negatively and resulted in high dropout rates and failures among the student population. The study demonstrated a positive connection between academic achievement in the Adult Basic Education context and social media and the effectiveness of this social tool as a method of instruction. The findings revealed the positive implications that social media technologies like WhatsApp have in overcoming teaching and learning barriers.

Social media has revolutionized how people communicate, and it has most certainly significant implications for education (Mozee, 2012). This gives rise to the question of whether social media applications like WhatsApp have an impact on educational instruction in the Adult and Community Educational and Training [hereafter referred to as ACET or AET] classroom. These phenomena can only be studied within a theoretical framework and the theories this research will reflect are the Social Constructivist Theory and the Digital Divide Theory as this study unites two main areas: learning pedagogies and social media technologies. Social media is used like any other tool in the education praxis. This is where learning is a cognitive process for achieving knowledge while social media technologies are an enabler of the learning process, as this research will attempt to demonstrate.

Key Terms: Social Media; Adult Education; Whatsapp; Social Constructivist Theory, Digital Divide Theory, Learning Pedagogies; Teaching Methods, Collaborative Learning; Online Communication; Digital Literacy; Digital Technology; Mobile Learning; Mobile Chat Applications; Barriers to Learning, Social Networking Sites; Andragogy; Student; Barriers To Learning; Digital Teaching And Learning

Introduction

The main aim of this research is to determine the connection between the social media application termed WhatsApp and the Adult Education and Training sector. Richardson and Newby (2006) suggest that academics should explore how facilitators can influence learning designs and strategies to engage learners in their learning activities (Mohamad, Zakariah, Khuzaimah, & Mohamad, 2014). Therefore, this study intends to explore the avenue of a social media application tagged WhatsApp as a platform for constructive learning to take place in the AET class. The theories underpinning this study, which the researcher finds appropriate to be the foundation from which all knowledge is discovered and interpreted, are the Social Constructivist Theory and the Digital Divide Theory. The Social Constructivist Theory will be thoroughly explained in the literature review but in brief, it emphasizes the social context of learning according to Vygotsky (Huang, 2002). The Digital Divide theory is a theory that seems apt for this study as it highlights a divide between students who have access to digital technology and those who do not have access to it (Chih-Yuan Sun & Metros, 2011). Bearing this in mind, and with the smartphone revolution, the researcher intends to investigate if this mobile era can tip the gauges positively on the Digital Divide scale.

In this section of the research, the two concepts of ACET and social media will be discussed as two separate entities in their totality. The researcher needs to choose the point of departure as illiteracy because one of the core purposes of ACET schools introduced by the government was to eradicate this problem in previously disadvantaged communities (CONGRESS & AFRICAN, 1994). According to ABET (2010), it is also important to bear in mind that more and more older students are starting to return to college, pursue and develop their careers, start new business ventures and realize their lifelong dreams (Frawley, n.d.). ACET is also now recognized by the Department of Higher Education as an institution that is Community Education and Training Centres to pursue adult education and training. (Potgieter-Gqubule, Cosser, Chaka, Raphotle, Aitchison, Baatjes & Pillay, 2012).

Aim of the Research

The information explosion and current technological development are rapidly changing the world and have both positive and negative impacts on every sector of society. Social media is at the forefront of these technologies. Adult learning Centres are no different in that. This is because social media has made a significant impact on the learner socially. Therefore, the focus of this study is to determine the effect of the social learning

capabilities of social media and the impact it has on both the lecturer and the student. However, the general aim of this study is to examine the impact of social media on education in ACET classes in Pretoria.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative paradigm for its empirical investigation as it was viewed as an appropriate method to retrieve rich information which provides insight into the phenomenon in question as well as puts it (social media) into perspective and provides an in-depth understanding of it in its totality.

The researcher combined different elements of qualitative research approaches for the broad objective of breadth and depth of understanding and collaboration (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007 cited in Mcmillan and Schumacher, 2010).

According to Merriam (2007:3-4) "The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" Thus qualitative research is premised on the perception that meaning is attached to our living world and all its events. Merriam goes on further to state that there are many meanings and clarifications of reality that are in fluctuation and that changes over point in time.

It is quite evident from the above that qualitative researchers are focused on extracting meaning from people because individuals construct their meanings within a specific time and context.

Based on Merriam's (2007:5) characteristics of qualitative research, this research type was deemed appropriate for the study because the researcher was viewed as the primary instrument for the data collection and data analysis. This research design however enabled the researcher to become completely immersed in the research situation to obtain immediate feedback from all the participants in the study.

Creswell cited in Mcmillan & Schumacher, (2010:320) states that "qualitative research begins with assumptions, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems" thus making an inquest into the meaning that both groups and individuals ascribe to social problem. The key characteristics that this study considered are context sensitivity, rich narrative description, process orientation, data analysis, and participant perspectives.

Data Collection Techniques

To gain insight into the phenomenon in question, this study was characterized by the contextual, descriptive, and explorative approach. Other characteristics that provided rich contextual and detailed data were field notes, group focus interviews, and observations. Questionnaires were also used in the data collection process to obtain

demographics and gave the researcher statistics on the phenomenon in question. A questionnaire ensured anonymity and had the same questions for all subjects and was relatively economical and time-efficient (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) in Mtsweni (2008), data refers to the raw materials gathered by the researcher from the world they are reviewing. In other words, the data collected through different mediums like registers, photograph records etcetera, provided the researcher particulars of what was required to gain a sound understanding of the phenomenon to be investigated. Richards (2005) in Mtsweni(2008), further states that the data is merely evidence that is used in the analysis process of the investigation. A questionnaire verified biographical details and academic qualifications placed the phenomenon being studied into perspective and gave a better view and understanding of the participants being studied. Mtsweni (2008) also states that the researcher must select data sources and set boundaries for generating the required data. In this study, data were collected through one-on-one interviews which were recorded and then transcribed.

A confirmation technique that depended on the responses of participants enabled the researcher to conduct focus group interviews which was a more resourceful strategy in which group members were encouraged by each other's perceptions. In these interviews, although there were structured questions, a narrative approach to gaining information was adopted, where the participants spoke freely; on the phenomena investigated. Knowledge is generated between humans through conversations and interaction and it is experienced in interviews (Cohen et al., 2011). Kitwood (1977) cited in Cohen et al explains that each participant in an interview will define the situation in their unique way. Walford cited in this same source, remarks that an interview is a social meeting, not simply just a location for information exchange (Cohen et al., 2002).

Theoretical Perspectives of Adult Learning

As quoted by Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) in Hansman and Mott (2010: 14): "Learning in adulthood can be distinguished from childhood in terms of the learner, the context…. and to some extent, the learning process".

This research could be perceived through the same lenses as online learning, eLearning, and digital learning. Since social media, although mobile, is an online internet-based platform and this research intends to focus on its learning potential. It is necessary to explore online learning literature that exists to create an understanding of how social media learning fits in the digital education space.

Huang argues that online learning has a setting unlike the traditional classroom and online instructors need to use some extraordinary methods and insights to lead to success (Huang, 2002). That is why one must understand the different theories that underpin adult learning. Alemu, quoted in Padayachee, refers to theories as to the basic raw materials which are functional within the teaching-learning practice. Therefore, the

learning theories in the following section "represent major trends in the way learning is conceptualized and inform practice in many ways" (Padayachee, 2012:29).

Social Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning theory deep-rooted in psychology that explains in what way people learn and how they acquire knowledge. This theory, therefore, has a direct implication for education. In a nutshell, the Constructivism Theory advocates that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). The core element of this theory is that human learning is constructed where new knowledge is built upon the foundation of prior learning and experiences. The two fundamental notions that orbit around constructed knowledge are that learners will modify new learning experiences according to their previous knowledge. The second notion is that the learning is active and not passive. These notions imply that the constructivist teacher is not "a sage on the stage" but rather a "guide on the side" (Hoover, 2015).

Dewey (1916) believed that the main function of education was to improve the reasoning process and suggested that his problem-solving method be used in many learning areas. Similarly, the methods of constructivism, emphasize the development of the learner's ability in solving real-life problems, thus following a process of discovery and making knowledge a dynamic phenomenon (Huang, 2002).

Doolittle and Hicks (2003) cited in Padayachee (2012), stipulates that constructivism is more flexible and traditionally relativistic where knowledge is constructed according to one's personal and social life experiences, which contrasts the "traditional search of knowledge" Consistent with this, Dewey (1916) maintains that methods of constructivism emphasize the learners' development in solving the real-life problems that they are confronted with (Huang, 2002).

According to the Social Constructivist Theory, the exchange of thoughts that goes along with human contact in conversation and encounters is at play here (Lynch, 2016). When analyzing Vygotsky's theory, the basic element is the social context in which learning takes place. Consistent with this perception, Gravett (2005) maintains that significant learning activities of the student do not take place in seclusion but instead are shaped by the culture, tools, and context in which learning takes place (Nambinga, 2007). Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the significance of learning within a socio-cultural context and how this collaboration impacts the knowledge acquired. He emphasizes the significance of the interaction between people, which includes both students and facilitators in their cognitive development, termed "Social Constructivism" and has maintained that isolated learning cannot lead to cognitive development (Huang, 2002). According to Padayachee (2012:31), "Since social interaction is the source of knowledge, the role of language, dialogue, and shared understanding is emphasized." Therefore, meaningful knowledge is created between people, in search of the "truth" through the

process of language and social interaction (Lynch, 2016). Within a social constructivist context, the recurring aspect of learning is the emphasis on dialogue, where students are urged to discuss, argue, negotiate ideas, and collaboratively solve problems as Cochrane and Bateman (2010) argue (Isaacs, 2013).

Simply put, the student's search for the truth using the medium of social media encourages social interaction between lecturer and student, and student and student. The knowledge is acquired through a shared understanding between learner and educator. This study focuses on social interaction through the medium of social media (learning process) where learning takes place that improves knowledge and skills. As Secore (2017) briefly explains that knowledge is then constructed by the learner where their existing knowledge is transformed through their experiences. As stated before, since learning is a social process, the Social Constructivist Theory can be applied. Even though the social milieu of adult learning has many facets, it is important to understand the social context in which this learning takes place.

The philosophy of student-centered learning is connected to constructivism and although some may believe that this entails individual work, Vygotsky and Cole (Hoidn, 2017) strongly disagree and emphasize that learning is a social process as well as an individual process. Caine and Caine (2010) and Sousa (2017) believe that the brain is social. To elaborate on this view, it is argued that although each person must gather ideas, feedback, observations etcetera, with other people, the person finds it difficult to think critically in isolation. Johnson and Johnson (2013;2015) endorse this concept of social learning justifying it by stating that cooperative learning displays positive interdependence, individual accountability, stronger emotionality, and develop positive attitudes (Laurian-Fitzgerald, Fitzgerald, Popa, & Bochis, 2018).

Mobile learning through a social media application as this study will attempt to reveal allows for both individualized and collaborative learning to take place. Mobile learning studies have provided empirical evidence which supports its effectiveness in the learning process which includes the sharing of information, debates, and discussions (Chuchu, 2019). The social learning activities mentioned in the preceding sentence suggest that the Social Constructivist Theory in this research is appropriate to this study. It forms the cornerstone of this study and thrives on the fact that social media, and more specifically WhatsApp, being a social tool, can also be viewed as a learning tool and a platform in which the process of learning takes place. The constructivist approach attaches as much importance to the journey (a process of learning) as it does to the destination (acquisition of knowledge) (Lynch, 2016).

According to Vygotsky in Hoidn's (2017) research, social constructivism explained in detail, refers to learning as the social knowledge construction process. Consequently, every function within the learner's cultural development appears two times: first, on the social level, and thereafter, on the individual level. That simply means that the first part of the learning is between people dubbed interpsychological, and the

second part takes place inside the learner termed intrapsychological. Therefore, the construction of knowledge takes place on two platforms. The first platform is a socially situated interaction with people and tools. The second platform is the integration of the knowledge construction process. This is where the interactions and communications provide knowledge into the mental structure of the learner. Therefore, cognitive structures are intricately linked with the sociocultural environment and are socially constructed. Knowledge is, thus, perceived as socially shared which is distributed in tools and concepts as Salomon is quoted in Hoidn (2017). Knowledge construction is not an individual undertaking but is instead a shared experience that is based on social negotiations (Hoidn, 2017).

Learning within the context of cooperative learning lies in the social problem-solving process which is internalized by the individual learner who reaches a level that faintly exceeds his/her current stage of development. This indicates that the student will be able to conduct steps alone in the future, which he/she can currently only handle with the help of "more knowledgeable others" (Vygotsky cited in Hoidn, 2017). That is why the social constructivist learning theory emphasizes collaboration with more knowledgeable associates, one being the educator and the other the student. Learning, through using the support of more competent partners, is known as scaffolding, which means "the help given to a learner that is tailored to that learner's needs in achieving his or her goals of the moment" (Hoidn, 2017:35-39). This simply means giving the learner the right amount of assistance at the right time.

The Social Constructivist Theory takes the constructivist theory of creating your knowledge to another platform where social interaction is an imperative element in learning and constructing new knowledge. As social media is the core substance of this research, the literature hereafter will establish how mobile learning corresponds with the social constructivist theory of learning.

Digital Divide Theory

Another theory worth exploring is the Digital Divide Theory as it highlights the inequalities that exist in computer and internet access. Some literature sources consulted to examine if smartphones have the power to bridge the digital divide gap. Since this study scrutinizes social media applications used on mobile devices, this research must examine the Digital Divide Theory and if at all there exist a slight possibility that internet access can close this gap using a mobile device (computer) and through the medium of social media applications (internet access).

The "digital divide" depicts the division between digitally literate people and those who lack digital skills or access. The digital divide "has been linked with economic disadvantage, low levels of educational attainment, and other indicators of social disadvantage and quality of life." (Hayes, 2013: 1) Many researchers have taken this concept and analyzed it from many different perspectives. It has even been re-

conceptualized in Hayes's (2013) study within the Adult Basic Education framework Warschauer (2003:47) points out:

When viewing students and the impact technology has on them, depending on certain situations, the student can be categorized as either a "digital native" or a "digital immigrant". This research will not argue the validity of these terms but will merely acknowledge that there are students who have digital experience and knowledge and those who are "digitally deficient" (Frawley, n.d:14).

Costello (2000) as cited in Herselman & Britton (2002) believes that the fruits of the Information Age will go to the knowledgeable and refers to society as the "haves" (educated) and the "have-nots" (uneducated). These "haves" and "have-nots" translates to the two sides of the digital divide. Costello (2000) goes on further to say, "that a revolution in education is necessary and the technology that opened the digital divide can be used to radically improve teaching" (Herselman & Britton, 2002:270).

Mobile education, as this research will reveal, is a new medium of acquiring and sharing knowledge. The Digital Divide Theory in South Africa is a theory worth exploring in creating an understanding of the status quo of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) access and South Africans in particular.

The digital age is an era that requires a paradigm shift in the field of education. Digital learning and digital literacy are all elements of this new digital society. Social digital competence is required in education, everyday life, communication, and in one's profession too. Digital pedagogy must be developed in keeping up with this new digital civilization to preserve our fragile world on the principles of humanism and creative development (Tsvetkova & Kiryukhin, 2019).

Results

From the responses received the researcher confirms that the challenges experienced by these participants are consistent with the studies of Nambinga (2007), Matjeke (2004), and (Dhlamini, 2012). The challenges experienced by adult students are transport, family commitments, domestic chores, work commitments, and parental responsibilities among others.

From the responses, each participant shared their personal experiences of how WhatsApp learning could make it easy, convenient, effortless, and time-effective for them. All the student participants agreed that WhatsApp teaching and learning could be a handy, beneficial tool. It was evident to the researcher that all the student participants were familiar with all the features of WhatsApp and used it to assist them with academic tasks. The student participants using social media platforms, all agree that they have learned skills like downloading, sharing files, recording audio, and other functions which have helped them fine-tune their technological skills at work. The 50 percent who were

using social media applications like WhatsApp have illustrated how WhatsApp has overcome some of the barriers they experienced.

The 50 percent of lecturer participants who use social media teaching were able to confirm that they have seen student performance affected positively and they have discovered that social media teaching was assisting them in achieving academic success. The lecturers explained the features of WhatsApp they use like group chats, photographs, images, video, and audio. To pass on information.

Findings Of Social Media Utilization Among Lecturers

There is evidence that suggests that smartphone and cell phone capabilities are being used mainly for information retrieval. The educators use their cell phones as a resource tool for any information required for the subject. The social media tool WhatsApp is used by a significant number of educators to chat or communicate with learners. Already the social media Application opens communication channels between the lecturer and their students.

From the questionnaire conducted with the 19 students, it can be concluded that 17 (89%) of students have a smartphone while 15 (79%) use the social media application WhatsApp daily. 17 (89%) percent of the students would like to communicate with their lecturers through WhatsApp if allowed to do so. 10 students (52%) use their smartphones to access the internet for educational information.

Findings Of Student Social Media Usage

The above results resonate with the Social Constructivists Theory of collaboration and mirror student engagement. The fact that 52 percent of the lecturers use their smartphones to retrieve resources to distribute to learners on WhatsApp is another indication of the social context of learning that takes place. All the participants own a smartphone, and this gives the researcher the notion that 100 percent of the lecturers and 90 percent of the students are the "haves" in the Digital Gap. Internet access and a digital device are important elements that can contribute to closing the gap in the Digital Divide Theory. From the data collected, the smartphone, the access to resources, and the internet allow the lecturers and students to be part of the digitally literate in South Africa.

Findings of Observations

The fact that WiFI is available at the CLC, can be viewed as the passport to access information and enable the use of the social media Application of WhatsApp. These assists both the lecturer and student to download files and resources when on the premises. The pairing of the WiFI and the personal smartphones is the perfect combination for knowledge transfer and sharing.

Findings Based on Face-To-Face Interviews

The interviews were recorded using a smartphone and then transcribed. Every effort was made to ensure that transcriptions were accurate, and the interviewee's opinions and inputs were honestly reflected. During the interviews, some questions were redirected depending on the interviewee's response and the momentum of the interview. From the transcriptions, certain codes were identified. From these codes, themes were formed as suggested by Bryman (2008) in Isaacs (2013). The researcher also identified patterns within the themes which will be discussed under the following headings:

Use of Social Media among ACET Lecturers

Almost all the lecturer interviewees owned a smartphone and ninety percent used WhatsApp or Facebook at one time or the other. One lecturer even admitted that her grandkids are teaching her to use the application while another noticed that a very old "Gogo" (female senior citizen) and other older students owned smartphones and were using WhatsApp daily. All the interviewees had enough knowledge of what social media is and very few were stereotyped into believing that it was used mostly for chatting and communicating. Once the lecturers noticed a window of opportunity open for effective teaching and learning by using social media some of them did not hesitate to use it the very next day.

Some lecturers used it mainly for announcements while others used it to pass on homework notes and even photographs of chapters from books for reading and sometimes chalkboard notes. The mathematics lecturer used the WhatsApp application wholeheartedly and preferred to teach and assist her learners using social media. She felt that when the learners went home to attempt exercises, they could take a photo of a sum they were finding difficulty with and send it to her where she would point out their mistakes on whichever line, she saw them going wrong and send it back to them. They would then correct their mistake immediately. She felt that WhatsApp allowed her to help her learners instantly. The physical science lecturer could not stop singing praises for this application called WhatsApp. He revealed that his learners were due to complete an assessment but when he arrived at school the photocopier was out of working order. He felt that technology allows one to be innovative and to think out of the box. He created a WhatsApp group and sent the exam paper in a pdf format to the group. Since most of his learners were already using the application (app) to communicate with him for educational purposes. The class managed to complete the assessment and marks were submitted on time to the department.

WhatsApp and the Social Constructivist Theory Among Lecturers

From the above data, the researcher can deduce that WhatsApp learning is an emerging skill that some lecturers find joy and success in using while others only view it as a communication tool. This method of learning runs parallel to the Social Constructivists Theory. The fact that WhatsApp provides visual real-life pictures of the escarpment or cartoons in a newspaper are examples of learning content that is real, meaningful, and

authentic to the student. Here knowledge is built on the sharing of experiences. There is active participation and student engagement between the mathematics lecturer and her students denotes learning is taking place in a socio-cultural context on a social media platform. This sharing of videos, photos, and resources reflects the interaction of common knowledge and highlights the principle of a collaborative effort where learning is created in the Social Constructivist Theory. The learning becomes more meaningful because real-life pictures of cartoons in newspapers, the escarpment, the plateau, and graphs are taken and shared on the WhatsApp platform of communication. The students are then active learners in the learning process because they are engaging with the lecturers and other students in the group. Experiences are being shared and therefore, the Social Constructivist theory is at play here during these discussions.

Challenges Lecturers Experience that Hinders Academic Success In Clcs.

It was brought to the researcher's attention the many challenges experienced by the lecturers like lack of resources and attendance which are the biggest threat to academic success. Since the students are adults who have spouses, children, homes, and jobs that require their attention they find it difficult to attend classes regularly. Some are faced with illnesses of a spouse or have health issues that become barriers to them achieving academic success.

Challenges Overcome by Using Social Media By The Lecturer.

The lecturers all agreed that everybody loves texting, so it is easier to teach via chatting. Some adults are shy they hold back in the classroom but can send their verbal or visual presentations via WhatsApp. The lecturers, through this research, were more open to a more innovative way of teaching and came up with the preceding ideas to complement their instruction based on the barriers they experience with students.

ACET lecturers felt that they could grab the attention of their students because the students were most of the time engrossed in chatting on their phones. This channel of communication the participants felt was indirectly motivating them to be interactive learners by continuously collaborating on WhatsApp about the subject matter. The interviewees also believed that this method of communication was convenient, accessible to all, and very user-friendly.

The lecturers are always fighting for more time to teach and some were of the view that it is easy if technology can eliminate this challenge. The ACET practitioners felt that they were able to do classwork effectively because of time constraints. Technology made it easier because they could send all chalkboard notes through WhatsApp by taking photographs of the content even in the textbooks.

When viewing literature on digital learning according to Gunn and Steel (2012) online learning is viewed as practical and concrete where learning is the desired outcome and technology is the enabler, diversity is acknowledged and students' perceptions are

valued (Kinash, et al., 2017). This perception runs parallel to social media learning where resources, discussions, photos, audio, or videos can be shared to transfer knowledge.

According to the DHET (39:55), distance education increases the educational reach of institutions by providing learning opportunities to many who would otherwise have been deprived, while the benefits of online or eLearning can also achieve this goal by using social media as a tool to encourage collaboration between students and the community without the barrier of space and time. Social media learning bonds the elements of online learning and distance learning making it a more desired platform for learning to take place, given the fact that it is becoming a popular mode of communication, it seems like the most attractive option.

Results of the study by Ramamuruthy and Rao (2015) indicate that besides the fact that the process of learning gets easier, meaningful communication between teachers and learners exists using smartphones.

The turbulence in society is the internet and the best benediction of this exists in social networking. This enrolls daily life activities of millions of people through enabling information and resource sharing, communication, and collaboration. A study concentrating on social media and more specifically Facebook as a tool for learning. These social networking tools as it is referred to in the study, introduce informal, lifelong education by motivating students and increasing their participation. This study confirms that our education system needs to be modified to achieve academic success and that education can be elevated through the social network as a strong part of education (Rahman et al., 2013).

Findings Of Face to Face Interviews With Students

From the Face Interviews, the data was analyzed and interpreted according to patterns and codes and the findings are reflected in the themes below:

Challenges Faced by Students

Many learners who attend the ACET centres are extremely determined to obtain a better qualification to find employment or to succeed in the workplace. Many attend with the hope of securing a better future. However, some of the barriers they experience prevent them from achieving their goals because of the following reasons:

- o   Returning home late from work and cannot make it to class.
- o   Exhausted at the end of the day.
- o   Domestic and work commitments.
- o   Illness of family member or children.
- o   Too many responsibilities
- o   Assisting children with homework
- o   Lack of transport.

       o   Household chores.

To summarise the above findings, time constraints, family commitments, adult responsibilities, transport, work duties, and fatigue are just some of the many barriers preventing learners from attending classes. Mobile technologies can overcome these barriers as it is a mobile tool and can be used and easily accessed by learners when they are at home or any other place during the day or night thus taking away the geographical confines of the educational institution. It is also portable, has instant messaging and connectivity and is convenient to keep communication channels open, and can provide open distance learning activities (Chuchu, 2019).

The focus group conducted with the students confirmed the above findings by Chuchu (2019) as the participants praised the use of WhatsApp as an academic tool to overcome their barriers to learning. The student participant claimed that WhatsApp use allowed them to complete all their chores and attend to their responsibilities and work at a convenient time for them. In this way, they get to keep abreast with tasks and activities and learning takes place anywhere, anytime, and everywhere, even if they are on a bus or train.

Findings of the Focus Group Interviews

All the data from the focus group interviews were analyzed into codes and patterns. These codes and patterns were interpreted, and the findings are reflected in the themes below:

Lecturers And Technology

The lecturers were very frank about the challenges they experience. Besides the heavy teaching and workloads and increased responsibilities and insufficient time to plan for traditional lessons. Some of the lecturers voiced their concerns about the lack of knowledge and skills on ICTS and found WhatsApp teaching a more integrated easier convenient approach. The findings of this research are consistent with other results in studies that also claimed that older and traditional method lecturers were reluctant to work with technological resources as was the case with two lecturers who felt they were technologically disadvantaged (Abdul Razzak, 2015).

What was also common in this research was the findings that none of the lecturers referred to themselves as posing any possible challenges. A possible explanation is that at the time of the focus group interview they did not see the highly significant connection between WhatsApp technologies and themselves within an educational context. Not being able to see this connection is clearly in itself a barrier that can be overcome through professional development that focuses on technological and pedagogical training of all educators (Abdul Razzak, 2015).

Challenges Experienced as Lecturers in the Community Learning Centre.

The participants also agreed that the dropout rates were too high and that all of them experienced "no show" from students for many different reasons. This has a direct effect on the success rates of each learning area in the centre.

The participants claimed that the dropout rates were very high because some students have children to attend to, others have been looking for jobs for a long time and suddenly they get a job and leave ACET without notifying the centre. Although there are evening classes, some adults cannot keep up with school family, and a job. They are unable to juggle all the responsibilities and eventually drop out. Attendance is poor.

Other lecturer challenges that hinder academic success include the following:

- o Computers are outdated in a computer centre.
- o No IT centre or resource centre for the lecturer to refer to.
- o Unavailability of resources like textbooks.
- o Only given curriculum /syllabus with unit standards. They must access content on their own.
- o Too much administration to do and less time to teach.
- o Recordings and portfolio requirements increase the administration workload.

Like Higher Education and from the above challenges listed, ACET institutions are a sector that suffers from a budget disease, because there are limited opportunities to improve the productivity of teaching (Fevolden & Tomte, 2015). This cost pressure paves the way for a more innovative cost-effective productive use of social media teaching.

Social Media and The Lecturer

When the participants were asked about their view on social media as a teaching and learning tool and as a blessing in disguise to address the challenges they experience, some were using it on a small scale while others found the disadvantages a deterrent for them from using it.

However, most of the participants saw social media more specifically WhatsApp as an application that can be used for educational purposes. These educators were already in contact with their students by making announcements, sharing resources, and communicating.

The different learning areas use of WhatsApp:

- o Math's past exam papers are sent through WhatsApp because 90 percent of the students possess cell phones.
- o Social Sciences: A group is created, an ongoing discussion takes place and activities are sent to the group which can be completed by the time they return to class.
- o English- appoints a class representative to distribute homework.

       o   Life Sciences- use real-life issues, and pictures to explain or clarify the content being taught.

The participants all responded that social media can be changed into a positive educational tool despite the disadvantages it poses. They felt that lecturers themselves need to familiarize themselves with the application as a tool for teaching and learning and should communicate with each other to educate each other on its use and benefits.

The participants also agreed that student performance can be improved because WhatsApp could alleviate some of the challenges that are currently hindering successful academic performance. It was like WhatsApp could fill the gap and make an improvement. The participants also showed by hand that all of them were using WhatsApp and most were familiar with its features and used it daily.

The interview also revealed that the only way that the CLC makes technology available was through the free WiFI. This seemed to some like a very insignificant contribution to the teaching. However, the lecturers who were utilizing this free service explained to the group how powerful this tool could be for them as lecturers. They could use it to download resources and pass them on to their students, thus alleviating the problem of lack of resources. The students themselves who could not afford data could successfully use this service to their advantage and reap the rewards.

Since most of the participants used the chalkboard and textbook method as teaching methods in the classroom, WhatsApp messenger was able to combine the two methods effortlessly and in less time.

Findings of The Student Focus Group Interviews

The following themes were identified from the Focus Group Interviews where the students expressed their concerns, successes, and failures of being an adult student.

The student and social media

The group of students were remarkably familiar with the term social media and even mentioned the different platforms they were exposed to. Of the five learners almost all, except for one, possessed their cell phone or rather a smartphone but all had some access to computers and laptops. The students

The student respondents stated that they check their phones continuously during their entire waking hours. One student even mentioned it is like an addiction.

The students went on further to say that they chat in English because they all do not speak the same languages. They also claimed that this technology which is social media made their life easier. The response to using social media as a learning tool was a concept already in use in some classes but on an exceedingly small scale.

The reason why these students prefer teaching through technology is that the benefit as they say is the fact that there is an open communication channel between lecturer and student. This continuous open chat relationship helps them tremendously. It is also portable and is a handheld device that is convenient to carry around.

A conclusive study on higher education institutions and ICT states that students are likely to benefit because of eLearning technologies that have increased flexibility and improved learning outcomes as they will enhance students' access to educational resources (Fevolden & Tomte, 2015).

The students "like to communicate on the phones and chat when we do not understand something." Because of convenience, they like the idea that notes can be sent on the phone. This method of knowledge transfer is not only useful but saves time. The participants also felt more confident and prepared for lessons if the lecturer send notes beforehand.

Challenges Experienced by Students

Like lecturers, the students themselves are faced with many challenges. The participants' response was as follows:

- Children's responsibilities (care, feed, homework).

- Domestic responsibilities like cooking cleaning and shopping chores.

- Long working hours.

- Exhaustion and stress.

Technology can help overcome these challenges as the participants responded by saying that they can still be in contact with what is going on in the class if homework is sent via WhatsApp. This enables them to complete tasks whenever it suits them and at the same time ensures that learning continues despite the challenges, they face like the fact that they are unable to attend classes regularly.

The respondents also mentioned that the skills that they learn on WhatsApp like texting, attaching documents, and so forth, assist them at the workplace to type and send emails. The features like collages and photos assist them with PowerPoint presentations too.

There was already a communication channel between these lecturers and some of their students and the students felt that because of this communication they managed to perform better in those learning areas because they had continuous support and guidance. WhatsApp downloads are more cost-effective than purchasing books. It also saves the time and effort of sourcing the book.

The research findings from students are consistent with other studies related to school dropout that indicates that the main hurdles that affect school attendance and dropout are poverty, the distance from institutions, and affordability (Nambinga, 2007).

Retrieved from the data of this research, the researcher believes that the social communication capabilities of social media can open communication channels between all stakeholders. This can eradicate all misunderstandings, increase student participation, enrich the teaching and learning experience and be an effective management tool.

It is imperative to acknowledge the time constraints of the lesson delivery and other factors that hinder learning like lack of resources, slow writers, shy learners who lack confidence, and lack of understanding of information transfer. Social media can be used to strengthen learning and teaching in this educational environment. If used correctly it can be used to use time effectively and productively, assist in learner centred pedagogy to create a collaborative learning platform of writing, sharing knowledge and resources as well as support for each other. The lesson plans and lessons observed revealed that content could not be covered in a session and this confirmed the lecturer's explanations of having limited teaching time in the classroom, lack of resources, and feelings of incompetence in the transfer of knowledge. This hindered effective learning from taking place.

Conclusions Drawn From The Findings İn Empirical Investigation

Findings show that both the students and the lecturers have access and experience with social media, especially WhatsApp. This is evident in the 90 percent of respondents who established that they have access to social media for various purposes and use the WhatsApp and Facebook applications regularly.

The findings further show that WhatsApp is the dominant application used on social media platforms. This is quite evident in the survey conducted where the respondents acknowledged that WhatsApp is immensely popular and their preferred choice.

Students learn differently. It is important to first and foremost be familiar with Knowles's (1998) adult learning assumptions (Dhlamini, 2012). This knowledge allows the practitioner to instruct the learners in a meaningful way by recognizing and accepting their limitations. Therefore, as Bryson quoted in Brookfield (2001) states that: "facilitators should assist adults to stand firmly against the winds of doctrine" (Dhlamini, 2012:43).

The platform of social media application used in teaching and learning in this research proved to be very effective and matches the sentiments of Marshall's (2016) claim that applications provide quality teaching. WhatsApp in certain scenarios was able to overcome many challenges the participants experienced and Githens (2007) agrees that a bright future wait for adults in education as they will undoubtedly be participants in eLearning programs encouraging empowerment and social interaction. In this

research, WhatsApp is an eLearning initiative that the researcher proposes which can contribute to ACET education and the greater good of society.

One of the most pertinent questions in this research is whether WhatsApp, a social media platform, can be utilized to facilitate learning. Although many researchers affirm that mobile learning technologies are different from traditional eLearning methods (Parsons & Ryu, 2006), and do not replicate traditional learning experiences. They rather provide learning prospects that cannot be reached without mobile technologies as Patten, Sanchez, and Tagney (2006) suggests.

WhatsApp is an application that is mainly used for chatting purposes and is a traditional communication channel to send jokes and chain messages, greetings, videos, warnings, prayers, photos etcetera, (Mtega et al., 2012). This study was able to redirect the participants' minds to the use of WhatsApp as a valuable educational tool and this changing mindset was positively welcomed. The power of social media as a teaching and learning tool enhanced instruction and specific academic activities proved to be successful for some lecturers as the data analysis disclosed. The study by Guy (2012) delves just below the surface about the academic benefits social media can provide (Guy, 2012). This research explores WhatsApp and its usefulness in Adult and Community Education and Training. A lecturer remarked:

"Yes, WhatsApp assisted me. I have proven it: The distinctions speak for themselves."

In any teaching and learning situation communication is key to success. This study opened a reliable communication channel between educator and learner, educator and educator, and management and educator. A greater understanding of individual learning styles is valuable information an educator can use to instruct accordingly as Kolb suggests (Lee et al., 2016).

Before this investigation was conducted at the centre some lecturers had the notion that those who were using WhatsApp were "lazy" to teach. That was because many were still stereotyped into believing that the chalkboard method, the textbook method of teaching, and writing notes on the board were regarded as real teaching. This teacher centered approach is evident that there exists a lack of knowledge with regard to the andragogical principles of adult learning cited by Muller (1993), Jarvis (2010), and Padayachee (2012).

After the many challenges were discussed in group focus interviews, the lecturers agreed with each other on certain perspectives and found common ground as a point of departure. The educators perceived WhatsApp differently and viewed it as a tool to help them achieve their specific teaching objectives. The aim for each lecturer was to ensure a 100 percent student pass rate. The lecturers realized that, like their colleagues, they too could at least attempt to change the status quo of dropout rates and failures by at least trying this new and powerful alternative of communication and instruction.

The ACET centre can prove to be a distance education institution for some students who were unable to attend. Work could be done at the student's time due to work, personal, and family obligations as this respondent said:

"At the end of the day when my son is asleep and my daily chores are done, I can do work instead of watching movies till I go to bed."

Closıng Remarks.

"Why does this magnificent applied science which saves work and makes life easier bring us so little happiness?"

Albert Einstein quoted the modest answer as:

"Because we have not yet learned to make sensible use of it."

The above response is the answer to the use of social media in the CLC. The invention of social media was to communicate on a social level and many still see it as "out of bounds" when working. This research, however, aimed at changing this stereotypical thinking by using a social media platform: WhatsApp as an especially useful and valuable tool to enhance the teaching and learning situation. It has also in some cases proven to educators to eradicate the barriers in adult education while achieving the ends of academic success.

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn"— Alvin Toffler

Alvin Toffler's quote is so relevant to the research in question. The learners are adults and have set ways of learning, the lecturers themselves especially the older ones have teaching styles that they have tried and trusted for years. Both learners and educators need to unlearn and relearn. This is important because the world is changing and so should teaching and learning styles. The ACET centres were an initiative by the government to reduce illiteracy and the 21st-century technologies have the power to make this initiative a reality.

Chan-Olmstead, Cho &Lee state that there are five characteristics that all social media sites and applications share: Participation, (engagement) conversation, (dialogue) connectedness, (linked) community and commonality (common interest community), and openness (feedback) (Khasawneh, 2017).

Social media is drastically changing the education landscape. This research investigated that the cyber school concept is made possible because of social media network applications. This type of instruction has the dynamics of a pedagogical model of open distance learning coupled with online learning.

The social media application, WhatsApp, that this research has investigated and deliberated are existing resources amongst the participants. Learning is becoming more reachable and students are at ease using the tools they are familiar with and intelligent adoption of this tool can engage students in collaborative learning which is the key to effective education (Liu, 2010).

Based on the empirical evidence and the literature reviewed this research proposes that the use of social media can enrich academia in ACET classes. The influence of social media applications on adult learning supports Vygotsky's (1978) declaration that learning takes place within a social context. Social media is fast becoming a prominent feature in our digitalized, interconnected global society. As this research suggests that social media can have an impact on instruction if used correctly and applied

appropriately, social media has the power. A student's academic performance is influenced by many complex and interrelating factors. Social media technology utilization in adult education, as the findings of this research revealed, plays an integral role.

The interesting aspect of this study is that the literature reviewed in chapter two was confirmed in my findings after analyzing the data. The literature review directed the researcher because of the knowledge gained from it. It guided the research in first exploring all the challenges the stakeholders are faced with. This point of departure led me to my core concept of social media and its efficacy in eradicating these barriers and at the same time enhancing the teaching and learning situation in ACET classes with WhatsApp.

Finally, this research serves as a voice for the social media advocates who are using it daily in their classes not realizing how effective the tool is in eliminating barriers to teaching and learning. This research opened a can of butterflies that not only gives some educators hope of success but also introduces Adult Basic Education to a new dimension in teaching.
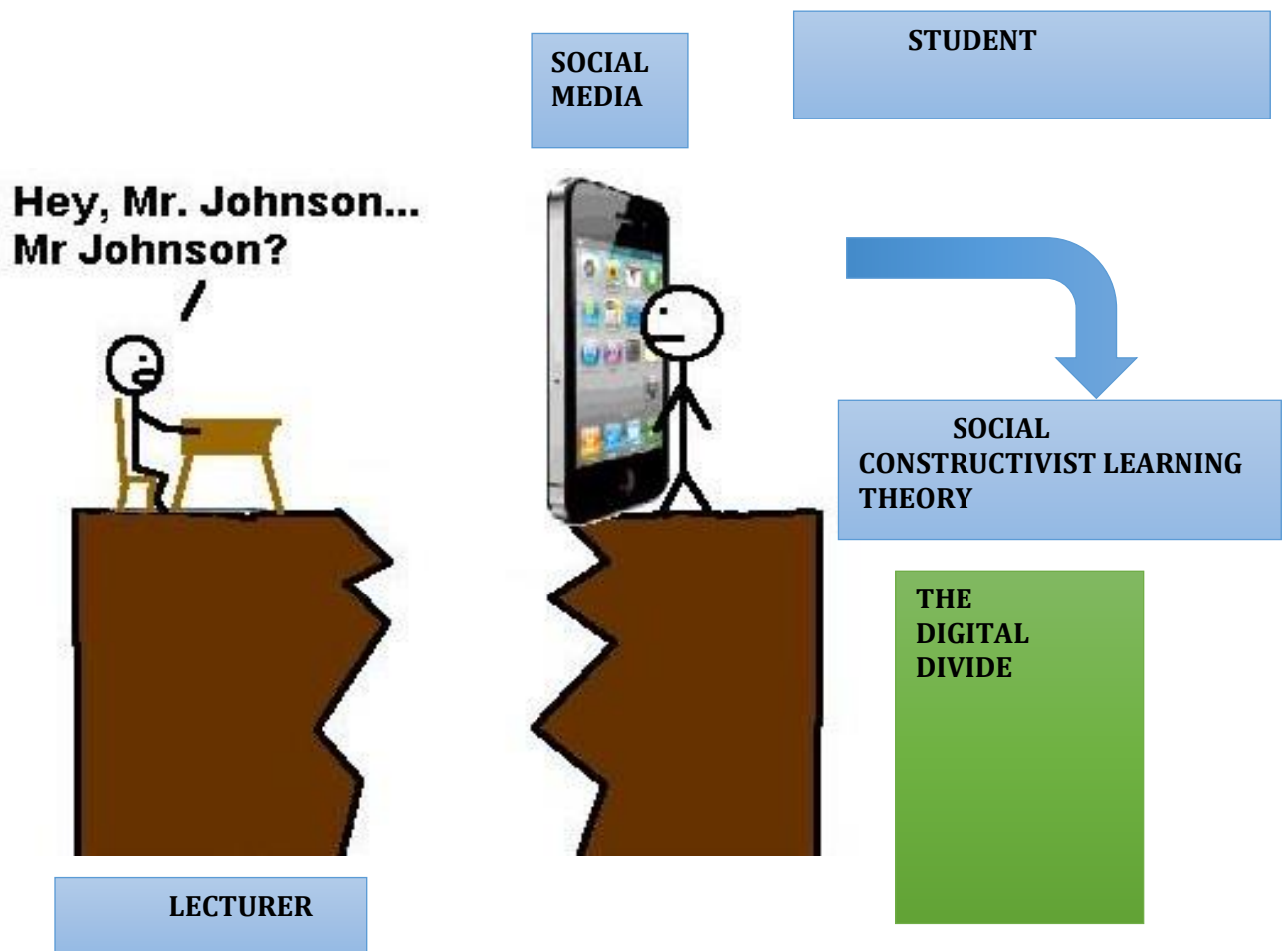
Figure 5: A theoretical framework of the impact of social media on Adult Education (Anon., n.d.) (Wolpert-Gawron, 2017)

The above figure illustrates the social media framework which contains three main components that are the ACET community, technology, and the social media application (WhatsApp). The ACET community interacts through WhatsApp providing support to integrate the content, enable cross-communication and offer collaboration tools that have direct implications for the Digital Divide Theory. The WhatsApp learning services integrate the andragogical influences of adult learning into the instructional strategies that are in line with the Social Constructivist Theory of knowledge creation which is socially (people) and culturally (WhatsApp learning platform) constructed. Hence the figure above is a diagrammatic representation of the significance and implications of the Social Constructivist Theory and Digital Divide Theory regarding the social media platform called WhatsApp.

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