FINNISH ENGLISH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Uusien opettajien taitojen työkalupakki on heidän valmistumishetkellään hyvin rajallinen ja heidän oletetaankin omaksuvan suuren määrän olennaista opetustyöhön liittyvää tietoa. Tätä tietoa ei kuitenkaan ole saatavilla heidän saamassaan koulutuksessa, vaan sitä on hankittava muilla keinoilla. On siis opetusalan tulevaisuutta ajatellen merkityksellistä tutkia töiden taitojen hankkimista muilla keinoilla. Tämä kandidaatintutkielma tarkastelee suomalaisten englannin aineenopettajaopiskelijoiden näkemyksiä opetuksellisista sosiaalisen median alustoista. Tutkimus pyrkii ymmärtämään, miten opiskelijat näkevät sosiaalisen median ympäristönä, kuinka hyödyllisiä opetukselliset sosiaalisen median alustat ovat heille ja miksi näitä alustoja seurataan.

Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty kyselylomakkeella, joka lähetettiin sähköpostitse englannin aineenopettajaopiskelijoille. Kysely pitää sisällään kysymyksiä, jotka on suunniteltu tuottamaan niin määrällisiä, kuin laadullisia tuloksia. Kysymykset koskevat näkemyksiä sosiaalisesta mediasta ympäristönä, opetuksellisten sosiaalisen median alustojen hyödyllisyyttä sekä syitä alustojen seuraamiselle. Kyselyn luonteeltaan laadulliset tulokset analysoidaan temaattista analyysiä hyödyntäen.

Tutkimus ja sen analyysi osoittavat, että tutkimukseen osallistuneilla opiskelijoilla on ristiriitaisia näkemyksiä sosiaalisesta mediasta, ja he tunnistavat sen positiiviset sekä negatiiviset puolet. Vastaajat arvostavat sosiaalisen median mahdollisuuksia yhteisön rakentamiseen ja tiedon jakamiseen, mutta ovat tietoisia myös vääristä tiedoista ja muista kielteisistä vaikutuksista. Opiskelijat pitävät opetuksellisia alustoja arvokkaina ja ennen kaikkea hyödyllisinä. Opiskelijat seuraavat opetuksellisia alustoja useista syistä, joista tärkeimpiä ovat tuki, inspiraatio ja huumori.

Tulosten perusteella sosiaalisen median merkitystä tulisi korostaa tulevien opettajien opinpolulla. Täten sosiaalisen median alustojen mahdollisuudet tukea ammatillista kehitystä, edistää yhteisöllisyyttä ja innostaa tulevia opettajia saadaan valjastettua hyötykäyttöön. Tuloksia ei voida yleistää pienen otannan vuoksi (n=9), mutta aihealue kaipaa kipeästi lisätutkimusta. Lisätutkimuksen avulla voitaisiin selvittää laajemmalla skaalalla tutkittua ilmiötä, eli sen yleistettävyyttä koko Suomen opetusalan laitoksilla.

Lisätietoa - Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

When newly graduated teacher students enter the field, most likely they are bombarded with brand-new information and no concrete material repositories or ideas on how to conduct their pedagogy, when simultaneously they are expected to provide new insight into the system and not just teach from the books.

Different educational programs, schools, and even single teachers have been expected to adapt to new situations and methods with a snap of a finger not only in the past four years but throughout the beginning of the 21st century, which is known as the digital age. In the ever-evolving landscape of education, a prominent by-product of the digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for both teachers and students. As technology continues to shape the way we learn and teach, it is crucial to understand how these platforms are influencing the experiences and perceptions of future educators.

Social media platforms have been rising in popularity at a rapid pace in recent decades as described. Through social media, people have a way to conduct not only their relationships but also their business and work. There are several different platforms available for a user to choose from when it comes to social media. Represented are photo and video prone platforms such as Instagram but also messaging platforms that promote conscious social interactions much like WhatsApp (Statista, 2024).

This study delves into the world of educational social media, focusing on the experiences of Finnish English teacher students. Educational social media refer to profiles that are educational, revolve around educational topics or the upkeep is done by a professional teacher in education. Therefore, by examining this world and the platforms within it, I aim to shed light on the future educators' positive and negative

perceptions of social media. By acquainting oneself with them, the current study aims at contributing to a deeper understanding of how social media can be integrated into teacher education programs and how it can support the professional growth of future educators.

2 BACKGROUND

This section investigates previous research involving social media, the basics of it, its usage in an educational setting and relevant studies, and by doing so seeks to provide a theoretical framework for the current study.

2.1 Basics of social media

Social media creates multiple forms of presence as the entity parts itself to different kinds of platforms and contexts. (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). Within the existence of social media, the term *social* and *media* have gone through makeovers themselves. As the place of social actions and functions of media have entered the world of the internet, the definitions of those terms have gone through development (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013).

Social media platforms, as described, come many in numbers. However, their nature also comes many in numbers, as the platforms considered under the umbrella of social media differ greatly. At the same time platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp and even Pinterest are considered social media platforms (Statista, 2024). Just by becoming familiar with the mentioned platforms' basic usage, it is no wonder they are considered under the umbrella of social media. Each of them include key characteristics of a social media platform. What then makes social media platforms themselves? Below are three characteristics that construct a mechanism called social media. It is to be noted that if one of these elements should

be removed, the eventual result would not necessarily resemble a social media platform any longer (Hynynen, 2014).

First, communities are a constitutional building block for social media (Hynynen, 2014). Due to communities' core function as a sociable and empowering environment not only in flesh but also in web, communities provide social media their definition of *social* and highlight the participatory medium (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013).

Collective association or togetherness highlights the communal aspect of social media even further (Hynynen, 2014). In different web-communities, one can express oneself and provide content of their own as one sees fit as long as it takes place within the guidelines of the platform thereby, collectively acting within the platform in several different ways. Platforms, in which we can see collective togetherness like described are most often messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp. This characteristic differs from other media outlets as they are being led and monitored regularly (Hynynen, 2014, p.17). Community is a key concept of social media as it highlights the very root of the concept.

Second, the content within social media, the participatory culture of sharing different web objects from one's personal viewpoint, is a vital component of social media (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). The simultaneous process of producing social media and participating in it is an interesting social process highlighting the role of the user of social media. The content within social media can take many different forms. It can be a single picture or a video in a person's posting feed. The content can also be pieces of text or even music. There is no specific limitation as to what content there can be in social media. However, the content as described here, can be divided according to its production. Social media content can be user-generated content or community-created content. It can also be peer-produced, ergo created within a group where all contributed (Hynynen, 2014, pp. 16-17).

Third, the technology or more familiarly Web 2.0 makes social media what it is. Web 2.0, as a term, resembles all the technology that is behind social media and able social medias' usage globally. The technology supports the above-mentioned key characteristics, community and content. Without the provided Web 2.0 social media and its main functions would not be the same (Hynynen, 2014, pp. 14-16).

Priorly, the three key characteristics of social media were presented. Besides them, the role of the user is a vital standpoint to consider. The term prosumer considers both the producer and consumer characteristics (Hynynen, 2014, p.17). With this phenomenon, where we the users of social media are the prosumers, one can argue for its effects on the platforms. When the platforms are prosumer majored, the eventual result is a decline in the quality of content (Hynynen, 2014). When anyone can post whatever they see fit, this is the prominent result. However, to counter-argue that statement, when the platforms are prosumer-prone, the creativity in the platforms can be seen to rise. Again, when prosumers are allowed to post in their personal preferences the highlighted creativity is eventual. Ergo it is no wonder that teachers much like other professionals have taken their paths to the world of social media.

To gain a substantial understanding of social media, one must acquaint themselves with algorithms. Algorithms are a set of rules and mathematic calculations purposefully aiming for the user to see content fit to their personal footprint. Thereby, algorithms control the flow of information coming the user's way based on previous searches and interactions in social media. It is a way for the platform to characterize the user (Jameel et al., 2019). The embodiments of algorithms are not the main purpose of this thesis; however, they are a vital part of how social media works.

As social media revolves around the users or more so the prosumers mixing in the whirlwinds of algorithms, the colorful contexts of social media start to arise. Depending on the prosumers' preferences their context and landscape of social media can have a political, cultural or even professional take that is personal to them (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). These thematic groups of contexts are not however unattached to one another, they overlap and engage. The contexts in social media are not the most visual part of the platforms, they lie in the pictures, texts and functions, but truly are they notable as they are the "guidelines" for effective and even ethical social media usage (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013). In this thesis, we are seeing the professional contexts of social media.

2.2 Social media and learning

The object of learning is a matter of importance in many fields of profession, and the world of education is no exception to that. The process of learning in a profession is a skill that the modern employee should acquire as the world is constantly evolving around them. New skills are constantly required. In journalism, where the digital age has provided the employees challenges in both technology and personal competence is a perfect example of the new innovative learning culture involving themes such as learning-to-learn (Koivula et al., 2024).

White et al. (2011) researched the use of social media in relation to various learning environments. According to them, one should take into consideration the actuality of learning in the realm of social media, and therefore they present a term called collective learning (White et al., 2011, p.37). As the respondents of this thesis' questionnaire are in a learning-to-learn -position present in a collective learning phenomenon this theme is explored all together below.

The paradigm of collective learning refers to the behaviorally engaged learning which can be seen used in several organizations. Individuals collectively accumulate knowledge over a specific period. Collective learning ensures personal exploration and experiences that manifest in the end as self-taught processes. These can be seen as extremely useful as a replacement for formal training especially when training the next-generation workforce. Collective learning, especially in a work-related environment is quite literally referring to its name: an engaging paradigm where employees collectively learn a process or for example a software by helping each other and by discussing the outcome, that is required at their practice (White et al., 2011, p. 38). Collective learning where one can teach what they have learned resembles a society where skills and ways of life were passed down to generations. When applied to social media, the term collective learning seems a rather natural match. One can try to teach about social media or through it in a training session. However, the most effective and experiential way to learn social media and its capabilities to host learning, is of the collective kind.

When referencing collective learning together with the presented framework, social media, the following example represents the phenomenon altogether: a teaching professional shares an intriguing idea relating to a newly developed classroom tactic and tells that they themselves are conducting it as a trial. Then a follower of their platforms takes inspiration of this and does the same trial in their own pedagogy. Thus, collective learning takes place.

According to the definition of collective learning, the term "learning-to-learn" can be fully comprehended. The users of social media are in a position where they learn to learn. The users gain the needed tools and methods to acquire the skill or concept in question (Koivula et al., 2024).

White and their colleagues (2011) have gathered that social media provides a substantial number of opportunities for educational purposes. Social media platforms in the sense of education provide first and foremost inexpensive and user-friendly easy-to-use characteristics for learners. In addition, the platforms provide collaboration and interactivity in an environment that can be viewed as democratic. By this democratic characteristic, one refers to the user comparison. The users are most likely from an equal standpoint. Each on their own, one doesn't have a more substantial chance of gaining power than the other. The starting line for all individual users is equal. In the sense of democracy, the users or learners are additionally given a chance to do exactly what democracy stands for. They can voice opinions, share thoughts, and participate in occurring conversations (White et al., 2011, p. 40).

2.3 Relevant studies

Bruguera et al. (2022) conducted research regarding perceptions of social media profiles. The main purpose of the article was to consider how communication students utilize social media in support of their learning and future careers. The results of the article mentioned the blurred use of different social media contexts such as personal, professional, and even academic ones. Through that viewpoint, the professional context proved to be the most valuable. Linked to the current form of communication and its place, the use of social media was described to be an essential tool for a post-

graduate student. The eventual result of such development is the rise of separate professional social media profiles from personal ones (Bruguera et al., 2022). This development is present in the cluster of educational profiles as well. The profiles examined in this thesis are not personal ones but more so within the professional context of social media with a touch of personal hues. This refers to the professional code of a teacher which can be conducted with a personal touch as stated by the national board of education in Finland (Opetushallitus, 2014).

The use of social media platforms on a person's own end can vary when considering their gender (Theopilou et al., 2023). Theopilou et al. (2023) studied this gender-varying activity in an educational social media environment. The differences between the biological genders were highlighted in three different themes: participation and social interaction, engagement, and motivation. An additional view was taken towards skill building and whether these platforms resulted in an actual increased level of skill. The study proved that both biological genders benefited from the examined profiles and highlighted those mentioned themes. However, the female attendees were recorded to have a more in-depth look on the profiles, as they dived into the profiles searching additional information whereas the male attendees looked at the more obvious given information and not seeking any additional points (Theopilou et al., 2023).

Al-Qaysi et al. (2020) conducted research on social learning, the way in which an individual learns through social media. Their research question focused specifically on the attitudes towards social learning and whether the said learning type could be implemented in specific institutions. Al-Qaysi et al. (2020) noted their question towards students in higher education. The study eventually presented that the studied attributes; gender, age, governorate, experience, and interest drastically influenced how the studied students felt about social learning. Some felt strongly against it, and some were in favor. Males found social media more positive as a learning tool, when females were more against it. The younger students aged 18-22 were more prone to using social media in learning in contrast to their older peers. The concluded result of the research was that the students held positive attitudes towards social media and as

a result the authors encourage local educational policymakers to take this statistic into consideration when creating future study modules (Al-Qaysi et al., 2020).

3 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

This study explores English teacher students' perceptions of educational social media profiles. With the following research questions, I aim to find out why the teacher students follow social media profiles and how they view social media. Therefore, the questions this study will answer are as follows.

1) How does the focus group view social media?
2) Are educational social media profiles useful to the focus group?
3) Why do the members of the focus group follow these profiles?

The presented questions will in these forms highlight qualitatively how future educators view social media, the benefits and the detriments. Simultaneously, the answers to these research questions shed light on social media's further usage, ergo how social media could support teacher development.

4 DATA AND METHODS

4.1 Data and data collection

The data were gathered through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to all Finnish English teacher students at the University of Jyväskylä no matter the year they are on. Therefore, the focus group is approximately 18-30 years of age.

The data is written word and numerical data gathered with a questionnaire created on Webropol. Due to the qualitative nature of the thesis, a survey was chosen to act as a method of data collection. Webropol, a survey platform, was chosen due to university recommendation. The questionnaire had both multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions enhancing the qualitative status.

Additionally, the questionnaire was chosen as the method to gather data with a minimal error margin. When contrasting an online questionnaire with personal interviews, the presence of the researcher in addition to the researcher's own opinions and values might compromise the quality of the thesis. The questionnaire and the data collection process followed the ethical guidelines of the university.

All together there were 9 questions in the questionnaire. The questions 2, 3, and 5 were close ended, ergo designed to gather numerical data and they provided information on the respondent. Open-ended questions focused on the perspectives of the respondents of how they see social media and its educational context. Open-ended questions were the majority in this survey. These types of questions were the

following numbers: 4, 6, 7, 8. Question 9 was optional, and it asked the respondent to make a description of how they view social media once more. The question was designed to give the respondent a chance to elaborate on the topic with information that necessarily did not fit into the previous questions frameworks.

4.2 Methods of analysis

As has been stated, this thesis is a qualitative one. Thereby, the data are gathered in a qualitative matter and the use of a qualitative data analysis method is in order.

The qualitative analysis method, thematic analysis was chosen according to its flexibility, depth, and 'personal' nature. Thematic analysis is the primary method of analysis as it, in its unique way, highlights the general understanding within the data. The method identifies specific features, and to the advantage of this thesis, patterns of the emerging data (Smith, 1992).

Thereby the emerging patterns have been brought to attention by initially combing through the data and by assorting them into combining subcategories. These patterns of qualitative data will be presented in the next section.

When investigating the survey answers, it was found that respondents brought up their perceptions of social media in a conflicting manner. Positive themes of community and information were brought to attention, in addition to more negative themes of time-consumption and misinformation. The respondents' views on the usefulness of social media was unanimously considered to be true. Finally, respondents gave support, community and humor as the main reasons for following social media accounts. These themes are described in detail in the following section.

5 ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings from the analysis of the questionnaire. All together the questionnaire was answered by 9 respondents. The data are analyzed in subsections according to the research questions which are stated in section 3.

5.1 Perceptions of social media

The results of the study present that the respondents view social media as both negative and positive. Six out of nine participants' answers are conflicted. As the upsides of social media, they mention its community platforms and the fact that they are fun. However, they also see pits: the false information and disturbing imagery available online.

As said, the sense of community and sociality are mentioned within the results of the questionnaire and are viewed as the primary positive aspects of social media as six out of nine respondents featured this. The results show that the communal aspect of social media is eventually a vital part of describing it as presented by Hynynen (2014) and Hinton & Hjorth (2013). Two respondents' view summarizes this description when asked how they would describe social media:

EXAMPLE 1: How respondents describe social media?

1.	*"Fun platform where one can meet new people. However, it can a lot of false information that can be harmful. The main positive affect is that we can connect with new people from all around the world"*
2.	*"It is both positive and negative at the same time. It keeps people connected and is a place to express yourself. At the same time, it contains a lot of harmful content."*

Five out of the nine respondents refer to the prosumer aspect of social media. In social media, you are the producer and the consumer of the content within it creating a new perspective of the prosumer (Hynynen, 2014). The results of the questionnaire highlighted this role by characterizing social media as user prone. You yourself can oversee the outlook of your social media and its algorithm, making it somewhat easy to maneuver to your own benefit. Similar insights are presented in Table 1.

Tokens towards the sociality of social media were made in several of the answers. In this questionnaire, the sociality was brought to attention in a very positive light. The data included no mentions of negative sociality in a distinctively negative lighting. One respondent referred to social media's sociality as anonymous, however made no notion towards its negativity or positivity. One should take into consideration that this might not always be the scale of things. The detriments of the sociality of social media are a referral to the possible cases in which people manipulate or hide behind it. As many know, the aspect of anonymity can cause trouble as people feel free to say anything, without considering possible emotional damage.

As said, six out of nine of the answers are conflicted making them both positive and negative. The previous discussion focused on the positive aspects of these conflicted answers as presented in table 1. However, the negative aspects are brought to light in the results by focusing specifically on the content of social media. Descriptions such as harmful, misleading, misinformative, unreliable, unsafe and time-consuming are used to describe social media in a negative lighting as can be seen in table 1. As we can draw from this, these are in referral to the content of social media not the individual platforms or applications.

It should be taken into consideration that seven out of nine respondents in this questionnaire were female. Theopilou et al. (2023) considered the adaptations of social media between the two biological genders, and as mentioned, female users were proven to be more active and adaptive in social media and with the content within it. The results of this questionnaire do not go on to prove entirely the results of Theopilou et al. (2023). The female and male respondents had similar answers in the questionnaire, ergo it did not seem to be relevant in this questionnaire what the biological sex was. But there is a chance this conclusion is made due to the limited data collection.

A single respondent from the questionnaire refers to the algorithms of social media when asked to describe it as follows, "Social media is a platform that can positively or negatively affect you and your life depending on what the algorithm served you…" As Jameel et al. (2019) present that algorithms control the information flow that the user sees, this comment seems relevant. Are the respondents' perceptions of social media as presented due to their algorithm feeding them information as the platform has identified the user to have an interest in education? Perhaps a further investigation is needed to answer this question.

5.2   Perceptions of usefulness of educational social media profiles

The questionnaire gathered data from nine students, and all of them considered their followed educational social media platforms as useful. The only difference between the responses was that they approached the term *useful* differently.

From those nine, seven explained that they find the profiles useful due to them being informational. The answers often referred to this as "getting tips". These tips included themes such as: teaching and classroom materials, creative tasks, tools for teaching and even news of the current educational world. Below are five of those respondents' answers to the question: Do you consider the platforms useful to you in some way?

EXAMPLE 2: How the respondents view the usefulness of social media? (1)

1.	*"…great tips and creative tasks for teachers to use"*
2.	*"…real life experiences and information plus tips and tricks for the future. Tips on materials that you could use."*
3.	*"Helps to stay on top of news related to school"*
4.	*"…really useful hands-on tips for class activities…"*
5.	*"…just entertainment, tips for work, material tips, helpful for beginner teachers…"*

Two people mentioned inspiration in relation to usefulness. They considered the platforms useful by their inspirational or even motivational characterization. One even mentioned that the platforms upkeep a reputation in which teaching is seen as a motivational or a "good" occupation.

EXAMPLE 3: How the respondents view the usefulness of social media? (2)

1.	*"…they are inspirational and there is encouragement that teaching is a worthwhile profession despite the image media tends to give us these days…"*
2.	*"…gives motivation to become a teacher, inspiration"*

By these representations, we see that the educational platforms are held accountable when it comes to being useful. Collective learning (White et al., 2011) can be seen to be in motion within these respondents and their chosen platforms as the learning is achievable in the realm of social media in a way in which an individual is or becomes motivated.

5.3 Why does the focus group follow these profiles?

The final research question was designed to get firm insight on the sole reasons the respondents followed certain educational profiles. The respondents noted points that align with the premise of this thesis.

Initially the focus group, the respondents of the questionnaire, gave referrals of support. Of the respondents, five out of nine referred to communal support when it

came to the reasons for following educational platforms in social media. The descriptions of the type of support focused on professional aspects of life. Professional support was described as "tips and tricks". However, some answers described the support purely as a mental one. The mental support was described as "*something to cure an impostor syndrome with*" and as "*knowing what to do, so when and where to be*".

The aspect of community was again brought up in the reasonings. Although support and sense of community are intertwined topics, the role of community was mentioned as a separate theme in six out of nine of the responses. Community was highlighted by bringing up "*peers*" and "*colleagues*" therefore creating the sense of a group.

Finally, humor was brought up as the reasoning. Three out of nine of the answers featured the theme of humor when it came to reasons for following certain platforms. The respondents explained that humor, especially when it matched the creator's personality, added realism to their platform. By humor, the respondents felt that they are not alone in this profession and mistakes can happen to anyone, as featured in the following answers.

EXAMPLE 4: Features of humor in describing social media

1.	*"I saw one of her humour Tiktoks about teaching in secondary school, I think, and I thought it was very fitting and funny."*	
2.	*"As a teacher student, I wanted to see and hear more about what life as an educator looks like in practice and then it was presented to me in a way that was funny and real…"*	

As the results indicate, the themes of support, community, and humor emerged as key factors influencing individuals' decisions to follow certain educational social media platforms. These themes are interconnected, creating a whole and cohesive picture of why people engage with these platforms.

6   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to see perceptions of teacher students regarding educational social media platforms. This refers to profiles that are educational, revolve around educational topics or the upkeep is done by a professional teacher in education. The focus was on personal experiences of the platforms, both positive and negative. The aim was additionally to view the reasons for following these profiles. The data that considered these was collected through a questionnaire that was sent to all English students in the University of Jyväskylä.

There were three research questions in this thesis, and they were as follows:

1) How does the focus group view social media?
2) Are educational social media profiles useful to the focus group?
3) Why do the members of the focus group follow these profiles?

The first research question was to be a control question. It was initially designed to warm up the respondent. As to the results of the questions, the teacher students' answers were conflicted. Six out of nine of the respondents considered social media as both positive and negative. Therefore, a clear distinction could not be made between the negative and the positive. They acknowledged positive aspects such as community and information in addition to the negative aspects such as misinformation and time-consuming nature.

The second research question viewed the usefulness of their preferred educational social media platforms. All the participants found the educational social media platforms they followed to be useful. Informational benefits were the most prominent feature, with participants finding tips and resources for teaching. Some participants also found the profiles to be inspirational and motivational leading up to them being useful.

As to the third research question, three main themes emerged for why participants followed these profiles. The first theme was support. The participants found the profiles helpful for professional support, including tips and tricks, and even combating feelings of inadequacy. The second theme was community. The sense of community fostered by these profiles was a significant motivator for following. The final and third theme was humor. Humor in the profiles resonated with participants, making them feel less lonesome and acknowledging that mistakes happen to everyone.

This thesis confirms the findings in previous studies based on the results of the questionnaire and the research questions (Hynynen, 2014; Hinton & Hjorth, 2013; Theopilou et al., 2023; Al-Qaysi et al., 2020; Bruguera et al., 2022).

The concept of the prosumer, as brought to attention initially by Hynynen (2014), where users are both producers and consumers of content, is supported by the questionnaire findings. Respondents actively engage with educational social media profiles, sharing their thoughts, asking questions, and participating in discussions.

Both the literature (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013) and the questionnaire highlight the social nature of social media, emphasizing its role in building communities and fostering connections. The literature additionally discusses the potential of social media for learning and its correlation with professional development, which aligns with the respondents' perceptions of educational social media profiles as sources of information, inspiration, and support (Bruguera et al., 2022).

The findings of the study have implications for pedagogy and teacher training. Teacher training programs may benefit from incorporating training on how to leverage educational social media profiles. The incorporation of such could equip future teachers with valuable resources and an already built sense of community before they enter the work force. Furthermore, the positive reinforcement and sense

of community found in the social media platforms can serve as a counterargument to current negative portrayals of teachers in Finland (Kari, 2023).

The literature suggests that gender can influence social media use (Theopilou et al., 2023). While the questionnaire did not explicitly explore gender differences, it is worth noting that most of the respondents were female, which aligns with research indicating that women are often more active on social media (Theopilou et al., 2023).

For better understanding of the topic and the phenomenon behind, it should be noted that the study focused on a single university in Finland, and it had a relatively small sample size of nine students. Further research with a broader demographic would strengthen the findings. Additionally, the study was produced on self-reported data, which can be prone to bias. The study is nevertheless useful as it brings out important insight into how certain students of similar status view social media and furthermore inform the development of strategies to promote the positive use of social media among teachers, while mitigating its potential negative impacts.

A way to further investigate the benefits of educational social media platforms is to see how teacher educators can integrate social media literacy into teacher training programs. Additionally, it would be extremely useful to explore the specific types of content (picture, video) that teacher students find most valuable on educational social media profiles. Finally, by researching the potential impact of using educational social media profiles on active student learning outcomes, the topic could be implemented even further on a more concrete level at schools or other institutions.

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