Borderless Education

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Weblog and University Learning:
Experience from Managing Class of Marketing Subject

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Abstract

Weblog, sometimes written as web log or weblog, is a website that consists of a series of entries arranged in reverse chronological order, often updated on frequently with new information about particular topics. It is a simple way for technologically illiterate people to make and use website for any purpose. Weblog can be used as a vehicle for learning process at university, particularly for non IT based lecturer.

Study on blog as learning medium has been conducted by a limited number of researchers. Williams and Jacobs (2004), on their paper, exploring the potential uses of blogs as learning spaces for students in the university courses (e.g. Harvard Law School), and records the experience of the Brisbane Graduate School of Business at Queensland University of Technology, with its 'MBA blog'. They conclude that blogging has the potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning. On the other view, Technology provides degrees of freedom that enable the creation of a wide range of learning activities for different learning styles (Shroff & Lee 2007).

The objective of this paper is to elaborate the experience of using weblog in lecturing. The lecturing subject is marketing management. The name of blog is www.ysutarso.wordpress.com. This blog is using bahasa (Indonesian language). The paper would like to answer questions on how to communicate to the students, how the students participate in the blog learning, and how the others contribute in the blog and learning. The outcome of the method is, as medium of lecturing, that blog can help stakeholders in the class to improve communication, participation and class management.

Based on the experience, particularly in Indonesia, blog will be a simple medium to manage courses. Although the other medium can be used (e.g. Moodle), the simplicity of the blog provides some advantages as the medium of learning in higher education.

Keywords: weblog, blended learning, marketing learning, CRM, university learning

A. INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has changed the teaching and learning method. The advance of computer technology and the improvement of people access to computer and communication create opportunities and challenges to higher education institutions to change their approaches and techniques in teaching and learning. The improvement of internet services provided by internet providers, such as email services, weblog, moodle and most recently google offers google apps that support learning transformation, facilitates teaching and learning process to lecturer and students. Although there are some questions regarding its quality, for example Smith and Mitry (2008), online learning is still to be one of the main development program in higher education.

Weblog is one of the most common software that facilitates learning process. Weblog enables people to express their ideas and knowledge and share them to others (Gupta & Pitt, 2004). Weblog facilitates students to share their ideas more effectively and manage their time more efficiently (Flatley, 2005). More importantly, weblog enables the readers to give comments, puts the user in the central of interaction, facilitates additional class for further discussion, and provides equal opportunities to all student to involve in the discussion. It allows to collaborate many ideas to produce new ideas. As a microwebsite, weblog is useful to widen the means of learning at university.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the experience of using weblog for marketing subject at STIE Perbanas Surabaya, one of higher education institution is Indonesia. The first section of this paper discusses the theoretical background, mainly research on weblog, followed by the lecturing process of marketing management, the outcome of this project and finally the conclusion

B. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION.

There are some researches devoted to explore the use of weblog as a medium of learning. Williams ans Yacobs (2004) explore the potential uses of weblog as a tool of learning in higher education. They states that weblog is generally recognized as an effective medium of teaching and learning. Weblog that used to be a simple on line medium of personal publication or a diary is now becoming a usefull medium enabling the users to share and collabaorate their ideas with others.

The use of weblog is not limited for personal purposes. It provides oppurtunities to the users make profit. Charlene Li, a senior researcher at Forrester, predicted that weblog would be an important factor of determining the way an institution produces profit (Bill Orr, 2004). Many institutions is now struggling to improve and optimize their relationship models – the personal networks that are relatively idle in their business. These social networks can be integrated in a system that enables the firms to manage their relationship with their customers and selling activities.

classes. Student participation in class discussion is an important aspect in teaching and learning process. Class discussion provides opportunities to students to express their ideas orally and may improve their self-confidence.

The development of teaching and learning materials are conducted in two forms, namely power point presentation and material development on weblog. The development of power point presentation is based on the standard power point slides accompanying the text book used in this subject, with some modifications and development. This standard power point slides is supported by additional slides developed by the lecturers. The development of discussion materials on weblog is based on the topics and activities covered in this subject. The materials are uploaded regularly on the weblog. The students can read the materials and shares their ideas on the weblog. All of the marketing management course materials developed can be accessed at www.ysutarso.wordpress.com.

D. OUTCOME(S) OF THE PROJECT/EXPERIENCE
The aim of this project is to achieve the following outcomes:

a. Capabilty of creating and using email
The capability to create and use email is the basic skill required in marketing management subject. During implementation of project, there are 40 students of 50 students taking marketing management (80 percent of total) create and use email. Students who do not submit their emails usually pay less attention to teaching and learning process as well as less active in the class and less attracted in communicating via email. The use of email in this subject is mainly as a medium of teaching and learning communication and submitting their individual and group assignments. It is also the medium of communication between the head of class and lecturers. Students use email mainly for submitting the assignments, giving suggestion and asking questions related to the subject. During a half semester of implementation, there are big number of emails sent by students and this requires special attention.

b. Capability of sharing ideas on weblog
Most students are capable to share ideas using weblog by writing their comments on marketing management subject weblog. At least, this shows that students of marketing management subject have tried to utilize internet as a medium of sharing their ideas. In most of sessions, a specific topic is chosen and students are required to discuss the topic on the weblog. Although some comments posted by some students are simple, their active involvement in weblog shows their eagerness to use weblog as medium of teaching and learning.

c. Capability of mastering teaching materials
Student capability of mastering the teaching materials can be seen from two aspects, namely their capability in responding issues posted in the weblog and the capability to answers questions given during exams. Based on the comments posted in weblog, it can be concluded that the student marketing management literacy is quite low. It is reflected in terminologies of marketing principles used by students. Most of them tend to use common language, although some of them use marketing management terminologies quite well. An observation on class discussion also shows the same result. Students rarely use marketing management terminologies in asking questions and responding to other student questions and comments, or they are unable to use the terminologies spontaneously. In terms of mid-term exam, the result is not conclusive. Some student shows a good understanding on the topics discussed while the others need more attention.

Jung, Youn and McClung (2007) study the purposes and strateges of using weblog in Korea. They identify five factors that motivate people to manage weblog, namely entertainment, self-expression, professional advancement, passing time, communication with family and friend and trend. They find that entertainment is the only factor that is significant in all models proposed in their research. Related to the strategies of managing weblog, they identify five strategies, namely competence, suplification, examplification, and integatitation.

C. DETAILS OF THE PROJECT & EXPERIENCE

Marketing management is a compulsory subject for all accounting and management students. The main aim of this subject is to enable students explaining the basic concepts of marketing, consisted of segmentation, targeting, positioning, product, pricing, distribution dan promotion. The students are expected to be able to use information technology, such as email, weblog and website, in teaching and learning process of marketing managememt. The existing teaching method of this subject mainly uses traditional approach. All teaching materials and assignments are given in a class with a minor participation from students. This traditioal approach causes difficulties for students, especially related teaching and learning administration such as submission of assignments, communication with lecturers, etc. These problems hamper students to achieve an optimal teaching and learning result. This problems may be solved by applying information technology in teaching and learning process.

The purposes and benefits of teaching and learning activities are to enable students to: 1) understand and explain the basic concepts of marketing management comprehensively, 2) properly understand any current issues from the view point of marketing management, 3) understand the development in accounting profession based on marketing management principles, 4) use information technology in teaching and learning process of marketing management.

The IT profile of students of marketing management subject can be seen from the intial survey to the students conducted at the beginning of semester. The result shows that the average GPA of students is 3 and the majority of students come from the generation of 2006. They use computer once in 2-5 days and spend less than 3.9 hours a day. In terms of internet usege, most students use internet once a week and spend less than four hours a week.

The implementation of teaching and learning activities in marketing management subject is based on the guidance prepared in advance, consisting of four components. First, syllabus that explains the design of teaching and learning process, covering the topics, the relationship between topics, the aims of teaching and learning, etc. Second, learning contract that provides a practical guidance for implementing the teaching and learning. This contract reflects a joint commitment between the lecturer and students, covering course regulation, course outline, teaching method, etc. Third, grading guidance that explains the way student progress evaluated, covering components of grading and the proportion of each component in total grade. This guidance is very important to lecturers in determining the performance of students in marketing management subject. Fourth, presentation guidance that explains the way students present their works or assignments in

d. Respond to using weblog.

Related to the use of weblog as a teaching and learning method of marketing management course, students give their critical opinions orally, or post them via email or weblog. Based on their comments, it can be concluded that most students support the use of weblog as a teaching and learning tool. The merely concern of some students is related to the cost of internet access. The student critical opinions are published in weblog and some of them responded by other students. This shows that students are able to discuss and share ideas via weblog.

b. Student attendance

The report on student attendance shows that on average students of marketing management course attend 89 percent of total class meeting. There are 22 students attend all the scheduled class meetings, 12 students attend 89 percent of scheduled meetings, 12 students attend 78 percent of scheduled meetings, and 4 students 67 percent of scheduled meetings. It means that the student attendance is relatively high.

E. CONCLUSION

From the above description, we can draw some conclusions. Firstly, weblog can be used as an alternative medium of teaching and learning, supplementing the existing tools. Secondly, the use of weblog as an online-based teaching and learning medium offers some advantages. It is simple and easy to manage. It can be utilized by lecturers and students with a very basic literacy in web-based information technology. Finally, in Indonesian case, weblog will become a teaching and learning medium that can be developed cheaply and easily.

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