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Between the Digital Stage and the Real Classroom: Uncovering the Impact of Teachers Being Education Influencers on the Education Landscape

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to comprehensively investigate the phenomenon of teachers transforming into education influencers in the digital age and its impact on the educational landscape. This phenomenon presents a new dynamic in which teachers not only play a role in physical classrooms, but also build a significant presence and influence on online platforms. This research will explore the potential positive effects, such as increased student motivation and engagement through creative content, broader dissemination of innovative teaching practices, and the formation of collaborative online learning communities. On the other hand, this study will also analyse potential negative effects that may arise, including issues related to teacher professionalism, the validity of shared information, pressure to continuously produce content, and potential distractions from the primary role as an educator in the classroom. Through a qualitative approach with in-depth case studies of several teacher influencers and analysis of their social media content, this research will identify patterns, trends, and challenges faced. Additionally, students', fellow teachers', and parents' perceptions of this phenomenon will be explored through interviews and surveys. The research findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding the dual implications of teacher influencers on teaching practices, professional development, student interactions, and the overall image of the teaching profession. These findings are expected to serve as a foundation for the development of wise policies and guidelines in responding to this evolving phenomenon, in order to maximise its positive potential and minimise its negative impact on the world of education.

Keywords: *education influencer, digital era, content creator, social media.*

INTRODUCTION

I. Digital Transformation and the Emergence of Teacher Influencers in Education

Digital transformation has permeated nearly every aspect of human life, including the field of education. Interaction and access to information are no longer confined to the physical classroom; digital platforms have become new arenas for knowledge dissemination and academic discourse. In this context, the emergence of teachers as educational influencers on social media represents a phenomenon that warrants critical examination. Teachers are no longer limited to classroom instruction, but also build broad online audiences, share innovative teaching methods, learning strategies, and even personal perspectives on educational issues (Carpenter et al., 2023).

The presence of teachers as influencers introduces a new dimension within the educational ecosystem. On the one hand, they hold significant potential to democratize access to high-quality educational content, inspire fellow educators, and reach students beyond geographical boundaries. On the other hand, this phenomenon also brings challenges and complexities. For instance, the content produced by teacher influencers may shape public perceptions of teacher professionalism and raise concerns regarding misinformation or content misaligned with national curricula. Understanding these multidimensional impacts is essential to maximize its benefits while mitigating associated risks (Carpenter et al., 2021).

One of the most pressing areas of investigation is the direct impact of this phenomenon on students and the teaching-learning process. It is important to examine how students perceive teachers who also act as influencers, whether this dual role affects learning motivation, classroom participation, and student behavior as a result of exposure to digital content created by their teachers. Such research is crucial to understanding how teacher influencers shape students' expectations, preferences, and learning styles in the digital era. Without a comprehensive understanding, there is a risk of overlooking significant transformations in teacher-student dynamics (Gil-Quintana & Vida de León, 2021).

II. Educational Transformation and the Role of Social Media

The digital era has fundamentally reshaped the educational landscape, transcending the physical boundaries of traditional classrooms. Social media, initially designed for social interaction, has increasingly become an integral platform for knowledge dissemination and academic communication. Existing

literature highlights the potential of social media as a tool for learning and professional development.

Brugurea et al. (2019) emphasize how social media platforms can be utilized to share best practices and educational resources among teachers, while also acknowledging challenges such as misinformation and time management. The emergence of “edutubers,” or teachers who actively produce educational video content on platforms such as YouTube, represents a significant evolution in content delivery. Vizcaíno-Verdú and Abidin (2023) extensively discuss how edutubers foster dynamic online learning communities and promote a shift toward more visual and interactive pedagogical approaches. This trend reflects a transition from passive consumption of information to active engagement and content creation by various educational stakeholders, including teachers. However, literature also warns about challenges such as misinformation, distraction, and the need for strong digital literacy among educators (Berber et al., 2023).

III. Redefining Teacher Identity and Challenges of Digital Professionalism

The role of teachers as educational influencers carries profound implications for their professional identity. Previous studies have explored how teachers navigate increasingly blurred boundaries between personal and professional life in digital spaces. Carpenter et al. (2023) examine how teachers construct and manage their online presence, highlighting the phenomenon of personal branding, in which teachers consciously or unconsciously build a public image that may influence perceptions of their credibility and authority among students, parents, and peers (Mantulenko et al., 2019).

Ethical considerations become particularly crucial in this context. Marin and Castañeda (2023) provide a comparative analysis of ethical guidelines governing teachers’ use of social media across different countries, identifying common regulatory areas as well as gaps related to data privacy, potential conflicts of interest, and professional conduct in digital spaces. These challenges are further intensified when teachers monetize their educational content, raising concerns regarding commercialization and pedagogical independence that may affect the objectivity and quality of content (Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2023).

IV. Impact on Students, Learning Engagement, and Relationship Dynamics

One of the most critical impacts of the teacher influencer phenomenon lies in its influence on students and their learning experiences. Early studies have begun to investigate how students perceive teachers who are active on social media, focusing on aspects such as trust, credibility, and engagement with shared

content. Research by Anis (2024) provides insights into student perceptions, while Bereczki and Kárpáti (2021) demonstrate that teacher-created vlogs can significantly enhance student motivation and support self-regulated learning through personalized and relevant content.

This phenomenon may also blur traditional boundaries in teacher–student relationships, raising questions about power dynamics, privacy, and social expectations in online interactions (Engeness, 2020). It is essential to understand how exposure to a more informal or public teacher persona on social media may influence student behavior in physical classrooms and their perceptions of teacher authority. Additionally, Urhahne (2019) explores parental perspectives on teacher influencers, highlighting factors that influence parental trust in shared content and perceptions of its educational value.

v. Pedagogical, Curricular, and Professional Development Implications

Teacher influencers often act as pedagogical innovators, presenting educational content that extends beyond or complements formal curricula. Mishra and Koehler (2016) emphasize how teachers informally adapt and enrich curricula through digital content, demonstrating the potential for curriculum innovation in the digital age. Similarly, the use of digital storytelling techniques has been shown to enhance student engagement and conceptual understanding (Smeda et al., 2014).

From a professional development perspective, this phenomenon underscores the need for comprehensive digital literacy among educators. Carpenter et al. (2023) propose relevant frameworks highlighting that teacher influencers must effectively integrate content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and technological competencies to produce impactful educational content. Furthermore, Gil-Quintana and Vida de León (2021) argue that digital platforms and influencer models should be incorporated into future teacher professional development systems, given their potential to facilitate peer learning (Mantulenko et al., 2019).

Despite existing literature providing initial insights into the role of social media in education and teacher professionalism, significant gaps remain in understanding the holistic impact of teachers as educational influencers. Many studies tend to focus on isolated aspects—such as professional development—without integrating perspectives from students, parents, ethical considerations, and curricular implications simultaneously. There is still a lack of research explicitly examining how the “digital stage” directly influences and shapes the

“physical classroom,” including teacher authority, classroom norms, and teaching–learning processes.

METHOD

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach, with a case study design employed to explore the phenomenon in depth. The purpose of the study was to analyze the profiles of teacher influencers on Instagram as micro-celebrities in order to understand the dynamics between these teachers and their followers on the platform. The researcher utilized relevant data obtained through the direct collection of information from three teacher influencer accounts on Instagram.

The study employed purposive sampling. The initial selection criteria for the Instagram accounts were as follows: (1) the account belongs to an active teacher teaching at a formal educational level (e.g., elementary, junior high, or senior high school); (2) the account has a significant number of followers (more than 10,000), indicating a degree of influence; (3) the published content consistently focuses on educational topics, teaching, or experiences as a teacher; and (4) the account has remained active for at least the past year. Based on these criteria, the researcher selected three accounts, namely **@fakurly**, **@galihtyanr**, and **@pakangga**.

The observed data consisted of social media observation notes, which were read repeatedly in order to identify key ideas and important phrases. Cross-case comparisons among the three teacher influencers were also conducted to identify similarities and differences. The researcher observed these three teacher influencer accounts throughout **May 2025**.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of three teacher influencer accounts on Instagram—**@galihtyanr**, **@fakurly**, and **@pakangga**—reveals distinct patterns in content orientation, audience segmentation, credibility, and ethical considerations within the digital education ecosystem.

The account **@galihtyanr**, managed by an elementary school teacher with a master’s degree from the United Kingdom, has approximately 293,000 followers. The content primarily focuses on effective teaching methods and classroom practices, with a notable emphasis on the teacher’s instructional performance rather than student visibility. Importantly, the account demonstrates a strong

commitment to ethical practices by not displaying students' faces, thereby aligning with principles of child privacy protection.

In contrast, **@fakurly**, managed by Fitria Anis Kurly, a teacher based in Poland, has approximately 130,158 followers. The content combines comparative analysis of educational policies between Poland and Indonesia with innovative teaching strategies. This account is characterized by a data-driven and analytical approach, providing detailed insights into educational systems and pedagogical practices. However, unlike **@galihtyanr**, this account includes visual documentation of classroom activities involving students, which raises important ethical considerations regarding consent and student privacy.

Meanwhile, **@pakangga**, a physical education (PJOK) teacher from a rural area, presents a more narrative and emotionally engaging content style. The account highlights diverse teaching approaches, real classroom activities, and the lived experiences of a teacher in a remote area who also works as a farmer. This content provides an authentic representation of educational realities, particularly in underserved regions, and serves as a powerful source of inspiration and public awareness. Similar to **@fakurly**, this account also displays student activities, which necessitates careful attention to ethical standards concerning child protection.

From an audience perspective, each account targets different segments. The account **@galihtyanr** primarily appeals to teachers, students, and parents interested in practical pedagogical methods. The account **@fakurly** attracts a broader intellectual audience, including researchers, policymakers, academics, and educators seeking comparative and data-based insights. In contrast, **@pakangga** resonates with physical education teachers, general educators, and the wider public, particularly those interested in inspirational narratives and grassroots educational realities. These distinctions illustrate the diversification of educational content consumption within digital platforms.

In terms of content style, **@galihtyanr** adopts a demonstrative and explanatory approach, **@fakurly** emphasizes analytical and comparative discourse, and **@pakangga** relies on narrative, authenticity, and emotional engagement. This variation reflects different modes of knowledge dissemination in digital pedagogy, ranging from instructional to reflective and experiential learning.

From a credibility standpoint, each account demonstrates unique strengths. The credibility of **@galihtyanr** is reinforced by international academic qualifications, **@fakurly** by data-driven analysis and comparative perspectives, and **@pakangga** by authenticity and representation of grassroots educational experiences. These differentiated forms of credibility highlight that influence in

digital education is not solely determined by formal qualifications, but also by relevance, authenticity, and audience engagement.

However, ethical considerations, particularly regarding student privacy, emerge as a critical issue. The practice demonstrated by @galihtyanr – avoiding the display of students' faces – represents a model of ethical digital conduct. In contrast, @fakurly and @pakangga must ensure that explicit, informed, and documented consent from parents or guardians is obtained before publishing student-related content. This issue is crucial within the broader framework of child protection and digital ethics.

Beyond content delivery, these accounts also illustrate the emergence of new opportunities within the educational landscape. For instance, @fakurly demonstrates the potential for educational entrepreneurship by offering services related to teaching preparation in Poland. This indicates the development of a creative education economy, where teachers can monetize their expertise beyond traditional institutional structures. Similarly, @galihtyanr contributes to enhancing digital literacy among educators by promoting responsible use of technology, while @pakangga provides motivational and humanistic narratives that strengthen public appreciation of the teaching profession.

The findings also highlight significant benefits for audiences, particularly in the dissemination of innovative pedagogical practices. The practical teaching methods shared by @galihtyanr facilitate informal professional development among educators, reducing dependence on formal training systems and accelerating the adoption of classroom innovations. Meanwhile, the analytical content of @fakurly enhances educational literacy and fosters critical discussions on policy reform. The inspirational narratives of @pakangga, on the other hand, promote empathy and awareness of educational inequalities, particularly in rural contexts.

Despite these opportunities, several challenges remain. The most pressing issue concerns ethical standards and student privacy, particularly when visual content involves minors without clear consent. Additionally, disparities in credibility and content quality pose risks, as not all teacher influencers possess sufficient academic or research backgrounds, potentially leading to the dissemination of inaccurate or unverified information. This underscores the importance of critical digital literacy among audiences to distinguish credible sources from less reliable ones.

Overall, the role of teachers as content creators represents a driving force in digital educational innovation, offering unprecedented access to pedagogical knowledge and professional development. However, the sustainability of their positive impact depends on how ethical challenges – especially those related to

student privacy – as well as issues of quality and professionalism are managed responsibly. These findings affirm that the “digital stage” not only complements but also actively shapes the “physical classroom,” redefining the role of teachers in the contemporary educational landscape.

CONCLUSION

The presence of teachers on digital platforms creates substantial opportunities for the democratization of access to education, enables the dissemination of innovative teaching methods, and promotes the professional development of teachers through online communities. Teacher influencers bridge the gap between the formal curriculum delivered in physical classrooms and the dynamic learning needs that emerge beyond the walls of the school, reaching students, parents, and fellow educators on a global scale. This role enriches students’ learning experiences through content that is more personal and relevant, while also inspiring collaboration among teachers.

However, this study also identifies the complexities and challenges inherent in this phenomenon. The boundaries between personal and professional life become increasingly blurred, giving rise to ethical dilemmas concerning privacy, credibility, and the potential commercialization of education. Students’ perceptions of their teachers may change, and there is an urgent need to ensure that the digital content shared by teachers meets appropriate pedagogical and ethical standards.

This study underscores the urgency for policymakers, educational institutions, and educators themselves to develop frameworks that both support and regulate the role of teacher influencers. Such frameworks should include the formulation of clear ethical guidelines, comprehensive digital literacy training, and the integration of these digital strategies into continuous teacher professional development. With a deeper understanding and a proactive approach, the significant potential of the “digital stage” can be harnessed to enrich the “real classroom” and to shape a more inclusive, innovative, and relevant future of education in the digital era.

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