The Powtoon-based Animated Learning Materials to Keep Students Learning from Home Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

Riskawati, Amri Tanduklangi, Alberth

Halu Oleo University, Indonesia.

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ABSTRACT

The fast development of science and technology has brought about changes in human life. This applies to all aspects of life including education. In the field of education, teachers are demanded to adjust to the development that they can no longer be dependent just on their textbooks or course books, if they want their teaching to be motivating and successful. They need to be updated with the current development of technology and be creative and innovative in their teaching. Hence, they need to be technology-literate. Learning interactions no longer take place only in the real, but also in virtual classroom, especially due to Covid-19 pandemic. This paper argues that Powtoon is a good choice for a teacher because not only is it useful for creating video-animated teaching materials, but it could also serve as teaching media by which materials can be interestingly presented to keep students learning from home amidst Covid-19 pandemic. What is more, Powtoon is also a Learning Management System (LMS) which a teacher can use to create a virtual classroom.

1. Introduction

Technological and scientific development has influenced all aspects of human life including education. Those who were born in the twenties centuries might still remember the time when a piece of slate was used to write on, the time when books and pens were
still scarcely available. One could still remember when only blackboards and chalks were best teaching media teachers used to teach. There are still many examples exemplifying the limited use of technology in the past. Barely do students of current generation see their teachers write with chalks on a blackboard, and the use of the word ‘blackboard” is fading as teachers write with board markers on a whiteboard.

Teachers of these days can no longer be dependent just on their textbooks or course books available on their shelves if they want their teaching to be motivating and successful. They need to be creative and innovative. Modern technology has provided them with tools and opportunities to be even more creative and innovative in the presentation of learning materials. As a consequence, they must be technology-literate. In other words, they have to have required skills in making use of available technology.

Technology-literate is particularly of importance since teaching and learning interactions is no longer just a within-classroom business only. Covid-19 pandemic has forced the learning and the teaching to be conducted outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers are required to deliver teaching materials on-line to students at home.

This paper argues that Powtoon is a good choice for a teacher because not only is it useful for creating video-animated teaching materials, but it could also serve as teaching media by which materials can be interestingly presented to keep students learning from home amidst Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, it is also a Learning Management System which a teacher can use to create a virtual classroom. This paper begins with a description of the Powtoon application which offers facilities to ‘animate’ learning materials. Following from this is the presentation of Powtoon as an LMS. Then, it will provide a brief description of the necessity for students to keep learning despite Covid-19 pandemic. The paper will conclude with an emphasis on the reason for choosing Powtoon followed by some recommendations.

2. Powtoon as A Media
The contribution of media to the successfulness of teaching and learning is well documented in the literature. Research findings have convinced us that media cannot be separated from learning activities, be it inside or outside the classroom. It is generally agreed that no formal learning in the classroom takes place without media. Media are utilized since teachers alone may not be able to convey messages across without media. Imagine a teacher coming into a classroom empty-handed, or with only a book of a subject, to teach. Only after a few minutes will learner get bored and the classroom become disordered. The use of media in learning has been agreed to have helped many teachers in achieving learning objectives.

Along with technological development, instructional media has also undergone fast development. Many instructional media are developed for the purpose of making teaching effective and learning successful. One of the modern media currently attracting reasonable amount of attention in education is Powtoon, an application, and at the same
time, a teaching media (e.g. Ariyanto, Sri Kantun, and Sukidin, 2018; Delviana, 2018; Semaan and Ismail, 2018; and One, 2017). The name ‘Powtoon’ originally came from a British company selling “cloud-based animation software” used to create animated presentations and animated explainer videos. It is a “portmanteau of ‘powerpoint’ and the word ‘Cartoon’(https://www.powtoon.com/blog/working-powtoon-classroom-teachers/). By means of Powtoon, teachers can produce more engaging learning materials in the form of videos and more interesting learning materials in the form of animated power point.

Edson Tellez, a volunteer teacher in rural Mexico, wrote about how Powtoon changed the way his students viewed the world, “They’re getting more creative, more receptive, and more dynamic in each class.”(https://www.powtoon.com/blog/11-ways-to-use-powtoon-in-your-classroom/). In other words, Powtoon can improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, hence improvement of learning outcome and learning process.

2.1 Powtoon Application: a web-based animation software
As web-based animation software, Powtoon allows the teacher to create animated presentations with their students by manipulating pre-created objects, imported images, provided music and user created voice-overs quickly and easily (Mersand, 2014). Using Powtoon in the teaching of a course helps the teacher to stimulate students learning desire by creating an attractive audio visual media. Powtoon application allows the teacher to import materials into a Powtoon animated template and add video or design his own animated teaching materials to make it more interesting and attractive to students. Similarly, students can also produce their own videos and share them using Powtoon application. Thus, not only can member students watch the videos, but they can also observe the materials presented directly.

The use of Powtoon animated videos also attracts students’ attention and increase student learning interest. One’s (2017) study reveals that Powtoon animated videos are motivating learning materials for students since they come with various interesting features such as handwriting animation, cartoon animation together with lively transitional effects and a very easy timeline setting-up, so that students will not get bored. Syafitri, Asib, and Sumardi’s research finding (2018) shows that Powtoon as digital medium enhances students’ English pronunciation and their motivation as indicated by the level of their participation, interest and attention during the learning process. Mahendra (2016) claims that Powtoon is able to increase the quality of students’ learning, so they participate more actively in doing classroom tasks, ask questions, and are more attentive to teacher’s explanations. The increase in student participation as a result of the Powtoon application is also reported by Trina (2016) who found that Powtoon affected students ability to complete both individual and group tasks. To try
to use Powtoon templates in making videos, please visit https://www.powtoon.com/new-dashboard/#/home.

2.2 Advantages of Using Powtoon Application
As stated previously, Powtoon can be used not only as an application to ‘animate’ learning materials and transport videos for instructional purposes, but also for online media of communication or LMS enabling virtual communication between the teacher and students. This, of course, demands the availability of internet connection as a prerequisite. Consequently, students are also required to possess android or other apparatus capable of accessing internet connection.

In spite of its limitation, Powtoon is advantageous in a number of aspects. Bahtraedu (2015) argues that Powtoon Application is advantageous in many ways, and recommends that Powtoon audiovisual media be used by the teacher as a media to engage students in active learning. He points out that Powtoon is advantageous because: (1) it is interactive; (2) it covers all aspects of senses; (3) it is practically used; (4) it is collaborative, (5) it can be used in big group of students; (6) it is more various; (7) it gives feedback; and (8) it can motivate students. Indeed, the interactive nature of the audiovisual media produced is an important aspect to be considered by a teacher in his teaching. A good learning experience by a student demands him to involve students both physically and mentally. Powtoon-animated presentation enables this to take place, by, for instance, including slide shows, videos, and music his presentation. (https://www.powtoon.com/blog/interactive-presentation-ideas/).

Probably, not all senses can be directly covered by Powtoon-animated presentation, but the sight and the hearing senses are clearly covered because of the nature of the application, but still, others are covered indirectly. Powtoon application provides templates which teachers can use for their teaching presentation to ‘animate’ materials, including videos and music. Being able to see concrete objects may indirectly enable students to use the other senses: taste touch. Powtoon enables the teacher to create awesome videos and presentations for the classroom, by which students can use their senses to understand the content.

In addition, the practicality of the application lays in the fact that it provides easy-to-use templates (to have a more impressive view on templates offered by this application for educational purposes, visit https://www.powtoon.com/edu-home/). Can Powtoon-animated materials motivating to students? Yes, indeed. Research findings have shown that the implementation of Powtoon-animated materials motivate students, and thus improve their learning performance (One, 2017; Syafitri, Asib, and Sumardi, 2018). Delvina (2017) argues that Powtoon can make teaching more effective, and thus affect students’ learning achievements and motivation, and can even help teachers improve their teaching skills. She further claims that Powtoon can help students improve their learning achievement and teachers’ skills in managing classroom instructions. Similarly,
Elvi and Efni (2019) also contend that teachers can improve the quality of their instruction by using Powtoon.

The presence of Powtoon as an application to ‘animate’ learning materials is of teachers’ benefit as it helps them to make messages less verbal (merely written and/oral form) due to the use of animated videos or pictures which is arguably to be more exciting and stimulating (Hendrik, 2015: p.45). In addition, Powtoon also enables students to produce and design their own videos allowing higher engagement of most students (Semaan and Ismail, 2018). Above all, Powtoon application make it easy for a teacher to make video animation, so teachers are not required to be highly skillful in animation. The video-animated teaching materials can be sent to students android for them to learn. It is functional and effective to be used in a class where students have different learning styles, and is easy to use by both teachers and students alike, and provide them with fun and creative way to send messages in an engaging format (Macchi, 2017).

Powtoon is no longer just an application for one to use as an animated presentation media or video maker. Recently, it has developed its project by expanding its service and benefit to the education, by providing an LMS by which teachers can create their own virtual classroom.

### 2.3 Powtoon as Learning Management Systems

Ellis (2009: p.1) points out that “...there are several definitions of a learning management system (LMS)”, but it is basically “a software application that automates the administration, tracking, and reporting of training events”. According to Ellis, deciding which LMS to purchase involves considerations, and price should not be the only factor to be thought of, and the most important thing is prioritized requirements.

Of the many media offered by the market, Powtoon LMS that allows teachers to create a classroom account is considered a good choice for a teacher who uses Powtoon-video animated learning materials. As an LMS supplier, Powtoon may have considered the compatibility of their products, so that it is easier and more practical to the user. In other words, teachers’ Powtoon-based video animated teaching materials can be more easily accommodated in Powtoon LMS. This will further makes it easy for students because of the integration of the system of learning materials and learning system.

Powtoon is particularly a good choice as an online instructional media since it provides detailed, step-by-step tutorial for the teacher to create his virtual classroom. This virtual classroom enables students to submit their assignments directly, in one place, to the classroom account making it possible for the teacher to quickly access them. Powtoon even allows the teacher to create groups within a classroom, to give them different names and descriptions, and to decide which group video(s) can be exported to YouTube.

For a teacher to use Powtoon as an on-line, virtual classroom, he is required to register. After registration, he will be given a main classroom page, where he adds students by emailing or send them the link to join the classroom. As for the second choice, which is probably more possible since having a phone number is more common than
having an e-mail account, the teacher should provide students with an access code. Indeed, students should be requested to first create their own PowToon accounts.

The introduction of Powtoon LMS into the field of education has allowed a teacher to create his own virtual classroom, and invites his students to join (https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/). After setting up classroom, the teacher create a group or even add groups to his classroom as required.

![Classroom and Adding a Group](https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/)

Source: [https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/](https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/)

Via this group the teacher notifies students, posts syllabus and teaching materials, or gives assignments. Students are able to post their answer and their videos to this group, and the teacher can view students’ assignment submission, and evaluate them. The group’s video can be exported to YouTube. [https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/](https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/).

This further makes Powtoon a better and more advantageous application for a teacher to keep in touch with his students, and, with the support of good internet connection and android mobile phone, students can keep learning from home during Covid-19 pandemic.

Powtoon supplier equips its LMS system with a Help Centre, guiding teachers to set up their classroom with necessary instruction to set up a classroom, adding a group, adding a student to or removing him from the group, viewing assignment, all are easily done by the teacher; (for further elaboration about how to set up a classroom in Powtoon LMS, visit [https://support.powtoon.com/en/article/setting-up-your-classroom](https://support.powtoon.com/en/article/setting-up-your-classroom)).
Covid-19 Pandemic and Learning from Home

Hardly did most of us think that we would come to the current situation due to coronavirus disease or Covid-19 pandemic. We have been demanded to stay home since the beginning of April 2020, and recommended to only leave home for very important purposes to cut off the spread chain of coronavirus which is believed to have a speedy spread in social gatherings. To respond to this pandemic, the government of Indonesia has taken numerous measures to slow down the rapid spread of the virus. The government has formed the COVID-19 Task Force, and has issued a number of circular and decrees to mitigate the spread of the virus. For instance, the Minister of Domestic Affairs issued Decree No. 440-830/2020 containing guidelines and protocols to be followed by civil servants ([https://indonesien.ahk.de/en/infocenter/news/news-details/covid-19-developments-in-indonesia](https://indonesien.ahk.de/en/infocenter/news/news-details/covid-19-developments-in-indonesia)). A lot of governmental activities involving social contacts have been restricted and civil servants are required to work from home, wearing masks and live a healthy life. Religious, educational, cultural, and other social activities involving a number of people are stopped.

In the field of education, the Ministry of Education and Culture is “preparing a scenario for learning at home until the end of 2020. The acting Director General for PAUD, Pendidikan dasar dan Menengah, contended that 97.6% of the schools have been conducting distant learning despite the fact that almost half of them are not adequately supported by required facilities. ([https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200424114337-20-496861/kemendikbud-buat-skenario-belajar-di-rumah-sampai-akhir-2020](https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200424114337-20-496861/kemendikbud-buat-skenario-belajar-di-rumah-sampai-akhir-2020)). Thus, learning from home has become a necessary measure to mitigate Covid-19 despite lack of facilities.

Formal learning activities which normally take place at schools under the instruction of the teacher is no longer the only alternative in our educational system. The advent of Covid-19 has widened our view that learning is no longer identical to schooling. Thus, we need to be prepared and prepare our young generation to distant learning, so they can learn at or from home. In such a condition, teachers are recommended to keep running virtual teaching, using any kind of media available.
Nonetheless, the presence of the teacher as a facilitator is still compulsory. The point is that learning activities should continue in spite of the pandemic.

In this paper, learning from home is considered a kind of remote learning, using, with some kind of modification, whenever required and possible, learning materials originally prepared for face-to-face classroom instructions. In our situation, the learning-from-home episode is an attempt to keep students learning, during the pandemic of corona virus. In other words, learning from home is only an emergency action to keep students learning and avoiding unnecessary activities. As a new phenomenon, virtual teaching and learning which allows teacher and students to interact from home requires technological support. Not all communication technology enables this kind of interaction to take place. Luckily, mobile phones powered by android are increasingly popular among urban population.

Virtual teaching and learning process is only possible with the support of appropriate teaching media and skills to make use of them. Vendors provide different types of media, such as google classroom, Lark, You Tube, Zoom, and Powtoon. Powtoon is considered a more applicable media to be used by teachers to present their teaching materials virtually because of some benefits and advantages as previously mentioned. It is not only an LMS, but also an application providing teachers with template to be used in preparing teaching materials digitally. Studies have found that, as it comes with templates, this media is easy and practical to use by a teacher: hence, it is not skill-demanding to the teacher.

The followings are examples of templates available in Powtoon web’s disposal recommended for use for remote learning and response to covid-19.

Choose a template for Remote Learning videos (https://www.powtoon.com/edu/join-group/)
Choose a template for COVID-19 Response
Health & Safety Template

5 Video Tips

May Support Be With You!

3. Conclusion
In a nutshell, Powtoon appears to be a reasonably good choice for remote teaching and learning simply because it offers various benefits for both teachers and students. In particular, (a) Powtoon can be used easily by both the teacher (to produce video-animated learning materials) and the student (to produce videos for their assignments as the application provides students with user-friendly templates); (b) Powtoon LMS enable teachers to create an integrated virtual classroom – teachers can post teaching materials in the form of video animation, assignments, notifications, while students can get access to those materials and assignments, post their answer and own videos; (c) Powtoon allows learning to take place from home, but still interactive; (d) As teaching media, Powtoon can increase students’ learning motivation and achievements.

References:
Last visited 20 October 2016.


