

IMPACT OF COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY (COI) ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this research, the researcher designed a community of inquiry on social media (facebook) for pre-service teachers and launched a course on educational equity and social justice. The aim of the research was to evaluate the impact of community of inquiry (COI) on pre-service teachers' perception of social justice and equity in education. It also aimed to assess the social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence of pre-service teachers in COI. The participants of this study were the pre-service teachers who are enrolled in the education departments of the Karakoram International University Gilgit Baltistan. Ten participants who showed high participation during the course were selected for an interview through purposive sampling. Teacher education institutions, teacher education, and policymakers can utilize this research to develop COI for different training programs. Future research can be conducted to develop a community of inquiry for the inclusive education curriculum of pre-service teacher education.

Keywords: Community of inquiry, Educational Equity, Pre-service teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The constitution of Pakistan acknowledges the basic right of education of every citizen of Pakistan. Education is the means to sustain and develop a society according to the need and to produce skilled human resources. An equitable and quality education impacts the future generation, but education has not been the first priority in Pakistan.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS, 2018) report, the total literacy rate of Pakistan was 62.3 % in 2017-18, with males 72.5%, and females 51.8%. Area-wise analysis reported that the literacy rate in rural areas was 53.3%, male, 66%, and female, 40%, and the urban area's literacy rate was 76.6%, male 82%, and female 70%. It is observed disparity between urban and rural areas' literacy rates as well as male and female literacy rates. Pakistan's literacy rate declined from 60% to 58% in 2018 (ASER, 2018). Being a part of Pakistan the education sector in Gilgit Baltistan is facing immense problems such as access, quality, and resources. Gilgit Baltistan (GB) has a diversified population on the basis of ethnicity, social class, political affiliations, and cultural recognition. Education is considered a means to eliminate these divisions and harmonize society but stratified education has deepened this gap among different groups (Roy, 2012). The government of Gilgit Baltistan claims to put education as their first priority and considered it a basic right. Only developing equity related policies is not enough but the government should execute these policies into action (Parveen 2018).

Access to education is a significant issue in Gilgit Baltistan due to a scattered population and physical barriers. Children have to travel a substantial distance to attend school, even at the primary level. Informal education is not sufficient to cater the dropout or the children who never enrolled in schools. The geo-geophysical condition of Gilgit Baltistan is hinder access, especially for females. Parents are reluctant to send a female to travel for school. Most of the population is living in small villages that are scattered over a mountainous landscape. (Alam 2017). Nine percent of children at the

age of 5 aged 11 years have no access to school. The ratio of out of school is high in Diamer and Ghanch districts. 91% of school-aged children are enrolled in schools. Among these, 65% are enrolled in public schools, and 35% are enrolled in private schools. Early childhood education is not accessible for a majority of the population, especially in remote areas. (ASER 2018).

The birth of the digital age has paved the way for users to discover various kinds of information on the internet. As it is showing continuous growth, social media could have the potential to improve learning and quality of instruction in educational institutions. A social media allows users to interact and collaborate with each other through social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community. Implementation and use of some basic features of social media such as interactivity and connectivity can have useful implications for the teacher-learning process. The concept of sharing learning topics on social media may serve as an instructor and facilitator of the learning process (Orlanda Ventayen & Ventayen, 2017).

SM-learning is the combination of different information and communication technologies that provides education at any time and anyplace (UNESCO, 2016). According to Abu-Al-Aish (2014), the importance of mobile phones is increasing with time, which is the further way the development of technology for teachers-learning. Kim, Rueckert, Kim, & Seo, (2013) say that teachers are motivated to include technology in curriculum and instructions for the better learning of the students. It is mainly needed for the young generation, those using mobile devices to connect with people in society (Kim et al., 2013).

Teachers are essential stakeholders in implementing SM-learning. Pre-service teachers are students of higher education on the one hand and the other hand they are pre-service teachers. They are the future practitioners to overcome the issue of educational accessibility in remote areas. It is the need of the hour to prepare teachers to lead educational equity to meet the sustainable development goal 4 as well as the international commitments of Pakistan. A community of inquiry of pre-service teachers can be developed on social media for the promotion of equitable education. However, there is less research available about the acceptance of the use of social media for learning among teachers in Gilgit Baltistan. The available research is mostly about e-learning (Qureshi, Ilyas, Yasmin, & Whitty, 2012) or it is focused on M-learning among higher education students. There is a need to understand pre-service teacher's perceptions about learning on social media. The social and psychological aspects of the learning of pre-service teachers on SM are not well studied.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential. In other words, it may be a free and fair treatment and opportunity in expectations, access, and achievement for those children who belong to different colours and marginalized communities. Equity is about fair treatment with all students without socio-economical, ethnic-religious, and cultural discrimination. It is the availability of equal opportunities and resources for all (Evans, 2013).

Equity is a state or a condition of inclusion, and fairness in any type of affairs and treatment with all people in a society. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Treating the people in the same way while ignoring their needs and individual differences, is not equity. On this regard equity is different from equality because in equality all people are treated a same way. Ryan, (2012) elaborated the difference between equity and equality. Inequalities may be existed in an equality, because of ignoring needs and individual differences. Equal distribution of resources, benefits, and responsibilities among people is not equity. If needs and individual differences are considered in the distribution and recognition process, then it may be equity.

The concept of social equity or social justice was introduced in literature and public administration in the 1960s when social injustice and social inequities were highlighted and recognized as social issues. Public policies and administrations started to address social issues. Consequently, better policies and implementation procedures were formulated. With the passage of time, social equity and social justice encompassed all spheres of life. (Pollard, 2013). Social justice in education is a new and emerging area of study but similar to the philosophy of human rights. (Adams, 2014). Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly defined and articulated the basic right of all people to access education. This article is aligning with Rawls's philosophy of justice as fairness. It is access to education without any social, economic, and racial

discrimination. The expectation of this declaration to provide quality education is challenging for developing countries. The overpopulated and politically unstable countries are facing immense problems to meet international commitments and social justice issues. (Woods, 2005).

Social justice and equity are commonly used in the same meaning and concept. Inclusion is also related to equity and social justice. Social justice inclusion and equity are terms use in same meaning in literature and face same problems and issues in their propagation. Inclusion in education focuses on access, participation, and achievements of all students. (Ryan 2012).

Community of Inquiry

Garrison et al., (2001) introduced the Community of Inquiry. The COI theoretical framework describes a method of generating a profound and significant (collaborative-constructivist) educational experience by the construction of three interdependent factors – social, cognitive, and teaching presence.

Community of inquiry (CoI) is a widely used and referenced framework for online and blended learning. (Garrison, 2015, p. 68), it is designed for purposeful e-learning communities and computer base conferencing. Unlike traditional distance learning, it utilizes asynchronous discussions to connect the learners through creating a community of learners. CoI provides an effective collaborative and inline learning environment for learners, where knowledge is co-constructed through three presences, Social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Cognitive presence is discourse, inquiry and resolution of content. Social presence is relationship within environment and communication among members of community. Teaching presence is about learning experiences. (Garrison, 2015).

Social Presence is “the capability of members to recognize the community (e.g., a field of study), interact purposefully in a trustful setting, and promote interpersonal relations by extending their mutual characteristics.” (Garrison, 2009).

Teaching Presence is the intention, facilitation, and regulation of cognitive and social processes to realize individually essential and educationally beneficial educational outcomes (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001).

Teaching presence is the third element of a community of inquiry. It provides a leadership role to ensure learning effectiveness in the community (Garrison 2015).

Cognitive Presence is the degree to which students can create and establish meaning by supported thought and discussion (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001).

Cognitive presence is the central process of community of inquiry where learner develops meaning and confirm understanding. Cognitive presence is operationalized through the Practical Inquiry Model that reflects the phases of the educational process. (Garrison & Anderson, 2003).

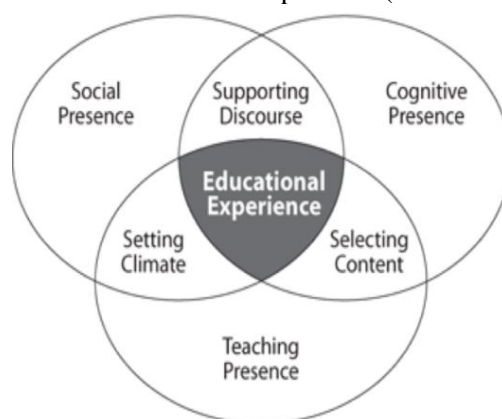


Figure 2: Community of Inquiry

Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of a community of inquiry development through social media on pre-service teachers' perception about social justice and equity in education.

The study has objectives to measure:

1. Pre-service teachers' perception about social justice and equity in education.

2. Pre-service teachers' perception about use social media in education.
3. Effectiveness of the community of inquiry to promote equitable educational intentions among pre-service teachers

Research Questions

Q1; What is the perception of the pre-service teachers to learn through social media?

Q2; What are the Pre-service teacher's perception about educational equity social justice?

Q3; How much is the community of inquiry effective to change the perception of preservice teachers about social justice and equity in education?

Research Methodology

This study used a purely qualitative approach. The Qualitative research paradigm provides opportunities to investigate any problem in-depth and is flexible in nature to modify the research tools and participants. (Creswell, 2014)

Population, Sample

The current research was conducted at Karakorum International University Gilgit Baltistan. The interview participants were students of the Education department of KIU who have completed an online course on equity and social justice in education. One hundred students participated in the Community of inquiry (COI) developed on social media. Ten students were selected for semi-structured interviews through a purposive sampling technique. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative and descriptive information from the intervention group of pre-service teachers whose participation was high in COI.

Instruments and Data Collection

An interview protocol was developed to conduct semi-structured interviews with the students for data collection. Five experts reviewed the questionnaire in the field for validation.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of a community of inquiry development through Social Media (Facebook) on pre-service teacher's perception about educational equity and social justice. Interviews were conducted for collection of data from ten participants, who fully participated in a course of educational equity and justice launched through a Facebook group. An interview protocol having nine main questions related to the topic and some sub-question was developed. Participants were interviewed on face-to-face mode with the help of pencil and paper. Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-step framework of thematic analysis was employed for the data analysis. According to Marshal and Rossman (2006) the purpose of qualitative analysis is to understand the participant's perspective about topic and to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the research questions the data collected from participants was codified. Then codes were divided into similar concepts and categorised accordingly. These categories helped to develop different themes. Following three themes were emerged from the data collected through semi structured interview of five pre-service teachers.

- Perception about learning on android phones and Social media.
- Pre-service Teacher's perception about social justice and equity in education.
- Effectiveness of CoI to promote equitable education intention.

Pre-service Teacher's perception about social justice and equity in education.

All participants were familiar with the concept of educational equity. They define equity in their words and understanding but they were not aware about different dimensions of educational equity. According to them equal distribution of resources and access in education is equity. One of a participant defined educational equity as: *To provide equal resources to all, children without any discrimination in a society is equity.*

All participants were aware about the sensitivity of equity and justice in society and showed their readiness to raise voices against discriminations in education. They were in favour of open discussion in society about social discrimination and to support the marginalized communities.

There was a consensus in participant's point of view about social discrimination and impact on a healthy society. On a question about their role for educational equity a participant explained:

There should be an open debate among people about equity, not in only education but in all sphere of life. Social stratification in society on the basis of wealth, race and colour is fatal for society. These stratifications create social evils and uncertainty. I always create discussions and debates in university and society on social inequalities. Social media is an effective mean to launch awareness campaigns on social equity in organized form.

Another participant expressed his views on same question: "Only awareness campaigns are not enough to uproot this social discriminated approach, it needs legislation and comprehensive planning".

A female participant showed her concern about social discrimination and social stratification in society.

I always create discussions in my circles on social discrimination and social rights. My participation in social activities and social right campaigns usually disturb my academic results at my college and university level. I appreciate the people who raise their voices for their rights.

All participants perceived that social discrimination and the problem of have and have not is a chronicle issue of our society. It need to be addressed in an aggressive form. Only slogan cannot eliminate these deep rooted problems. It needs a well-planned and comprehensive legislation. It also needs some skills in individuals who claim to be ambassador of social equity. On a question about skills for equity A participant elaborated:

Communication and motivation skills are needed for a person who works on social right. For a leading role in social rights movements these two skills play vital role to motivate the people for their rights. There should be an awareness campaign first. A mass population is derived from their basic rights but they are unaware of their rights. A small population is aware and raise voices for rights and social discrimination.

All participants are aware about the debates and discussion about social justice in their society. They try to participate in these debates. These debates are limited in a small group and circles of society. A large population and masses are not unaware about these discriminations. Participants were aware about social justice and equity in society and social discriminations but they did not elaborate about Social justice and equity in education. The concept of equity in education was not cleared. Only one participant defined equity in education as "To provide equal resources to all, children without any discrimination in a society is equity".

Pre-service Teacher's perception about learning trough social Media

Use of android phones is common practice of pre-service teachers in Gilgit Baltistan. They use in campus and out of campus for educational purposes but it was limited. Multi facet usage of android phone and social media for educational activities is limited. All participants reported that they use android phones for dictionary, emails visits different sights for reading material. Some participants are on different educational groups in social media but their participation is limited to likes only. One of the participants explained that:

I use only dictionary on my phone or to down load any paper from google. I am member of two educational groups on facebook but my participation is limited to likes and short comments. Group admins never motivate or urge me to participate in group activities.

All participants reported that they had no any opportunity to participate in a regular educational group on social media. Another participant reported:

Use of cell phone for educational purposes is limited. Use of Youtube is common in my practice to understand any concept and I use cell phone for dictionary purposes. I never joined any group in a formal way. Having less exposure of social media it was limited only for recreational activities.

Group participation of pre-service teachers shows the willingness and intention for the use of SM for educational purposes. Taking a course on social media was a first experience and new exposure for participants and they were motivated and intended to learn on SM. A participant explained his experience on group:

It was a first experience to participate and interact within highly qualified people in group. I felt hesitation initially because I was not familiar with group members. But the comments and

appreciation on my posts by other members gave me a courage and motivation. I fully participated in discussion. It was a classroom environment where I openly discuss my ideas and comments on other posts and comfortably expressed my point of view on forum.

Curiosity and brainstorming of participants indicate their interest and intention for learning on SM. They fully participated in group activities and continuously searched for further study about topic. All participants were highly motivated and intended to use social media and android phones for their educational purposes.

Another participant elaborated:

After the group activities I tried to visit different sites for further study on given topic or task. I down loaded and read a number of articles on this topic. Different posts and activities in group cleared my understanding about social issues of oppressed communities which were not serious issues for me, before the course.

All participants reported that; android phones and SM are not commonly used for educational purposes in our society. Social media and android phones are used only in leisure time for entertainment. S

On a question regarding subjective norms for learning through androids devices a participant answered:

The common use of social media and android phones in our society is only for recreational activities. People are not aware about the use of android phones and social media for educational purposes. I observed few pages or groups on social media but they are not effective. I am member of two groups but my participation is limited to likes and short comments.

All participants were lacking confidence in using SM for educational purposes. They emphasized its purposeful use in daily life. A participant shared his experience:

Initially I was not confident to share my views and ideas. From second week of the course I realized that group members are so cooperative. Their cooperation and way of communication encouraged me to participate in group activities. Group members spared their time for discussion. With the passage of time I developed a closed relation with group members, even I contact some group members personally for my guidance. I can say that there was an excellent relation with group members.

Effectiveness of CoI to change the perception of pre-service teachers about social justice and equity in education

All participants reported that the platform of Community of Inquiry (CoI) was highly effective to clear their understanding about educational equity. It was a first experience for all participants to take a course on social media. It has changed the perception of participants about the use of social media. One of the participant expressed his experience:

The equitable education was not new word for me. I did read very little on this topic but not in detailed. I thought it as just equal education system for all pupils in any country or society. There was no clear difference between equity and equality. After went through the course my concept and understanding has been entirely changed. The concept of education equity and its application on any education system is cleared now. Content and videos shared on page comprehensively defined the equity.

Participants were convinced that this platform was useful for regular classes. Physical distance was not hindered in their teaching and learning process. A participants from B.ed class reported: *Ideas and concepts I learnt from this group is no less than the learning of face to face classroom of my university.*

The three elements of CoI, social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence was its maximum level. Participants fully participated in group activities and it enhance their curiosity for learning about the given concepts. About the teaching presence a participants stated:

The course was highly structured and systematic in a proper sequence. Weekly unites were posted in an organized way with sequentially. Course instructions and unit instructions were cleared. I easily understood all instructions and guide lines. There was a logical relevancy among topics and activities. Instructor engaged all group members in a such way all members had chance to participate and communicate in group. Instructor was always available for support in group.

Another participant responded:

It was difficult to understand the mode of course and its breakup initially. I contacted with instructor on whatsapp to understand the course and modules. He properly guided me in telephonic discussion. From second week I got full understanding of course and its mode of delivery. Instructor has designed a comprehensive course with clear instructions. Activities were attractive for participants. The concept of equitable education was clearly defined and understandable. If I conclude my comments, "it was an effective and comprehensive course"

On a question about social presence all participants stated that there was a flexible attractive course for an open discussion. There was no any hesitation to participate in discussion. Physical distance was not felt at any movement. A participant expressed:

I was not confident to share my views and ideas. From second week of the course I realized that group members are so cooperative. Their cooperation and way of communication encouraged me to participate in group activities. Group members spared their time for discussion. With the passage of time I developed a closed relation with group members, even I contact some group members personally for my guidance

CONCLUSION

Findings of current study shows the effectiveness of COI on social media. The qualitative data clearly depict that pre-services teacher's perception about social justice and equity in education has been changed after receiving course in community of inquiry on social media. Eight weeks course has broadened the concepts and ideas of participants about social justice and equity. The post interview of participants reflects that the perception about social media usage for educational purposes has been changed. Almost all participants had first experience of taking a regular course on a social media group. Preservice teachers are present on social media but they use it for recreational activities. Their perception about social media is limited. Group participation of pre-service teachers shows the willingness and intention for the use of SM for educational purposes but they had no any opportunity. It was a first experience and new exposure for participants and they were motivated and intended to learn on SM. It was a first experience to participate and interact within highly qualified people in group. They fully participated in discussion and openly discuss ideas comfortably expressed their point of view on forum.

Social presence cognitive presence and teaching presence have engaged participants in course. All participants reported that they were socially present and interact with each other. Social interaction has enhanced their participation in group and bridged the physical distance. Social presence also create an inclusive environment where participants shares their ideas without any hesitation and encourage participation. The findings suggest that Social presence and synchronous interaction in community of inquiry (COI) engage participants and helps effective teaching presence. Social presence plays a mediating role between cognitive and teaching presences through synchronising the interaction among learners teachers, students, content, media tools with in an online experience. Social presence depend on the ability of learners to communicate in a trustworthy environment and develop a strong relationship among the participants of community (Whiteside et al., 2017).

Findings further indicate that effective teaching presence helps cognitive presence. Participants can be engage and encourage if teacher clearly define course content and communicate properly. Teacher's clear communication can create a sense of belonging and group coherence. Teaching presence keep and maintain the relationship balance among three presences in community and align it with intended learning outcomes. In effective teaching presence learners play an active role. (Garrison, et al., 2000).

Furthermore, the finding of the study shows the social presence and teaching presence supported cognitive presence. Cognitive presence is basic factor for effective learning and critical thinking. It resulted from combination of teaching presence and social presence, (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2010). Participants were convinced that this platform was useful for regular classes. Physical distance was not hindered in their teaching and learning process. Learning in this group was no less than the learning of face to face classroom of my university. Concept of social justice and equity were understood clearly by participants with its broader horizon. Data of the research collected through interviews indicate that the participants after receiving in COI through social media able to

define explain the concept of social justice and equity in education. Development of community of inquiry (COI) on social media is an effective mode of teaching for regular courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teacher education institutions should introduce community of inquiry (COI) for online courses.
- Future research can be conducted to develop a community of inquiry for the inclusive education curriculum of pre-service teacher education.

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