Ministry of Education in Distance Education

Subjects: Classics

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Research on distance education in the pandemic is flourishing as the world experiences COVID-19 and its educational consequences. Moreover, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed weaknesses that existed in pre-pandemic education systems and added new challenges.

distance education ministry of education emergency education

1. Distance Learning in the Schools

Fidalgo et al. [1] say that the World Wide Web helped a large fraction of the world's population have access to information, which supported the distribution of educational content, and thus assisted in moving distance education to the digital era. Researchers who came to define and describe distance education emphasized that this educational experience occurs in a context where instructors and learners are separated in time and space [2]. There is no requirement that you attend an academic institution to achieve a degree or credential [3].

Distance, online and blended learning impacts positively students' learning, including their learning outcomes [4]), their affective learning [5], the metacognitive potential of learning [6], their motivation [7], their interaction [8] and their identity [9]. However, this positive impact of distance education may not always be valid. Parkinson et al. [10] found that distance education has benefits for off-campus students by providing easier access to educational opportunities, but they also found that in a traditional classroom setting, on-campus students have greater satisfaction with their learning experiences.

2. Emergency Education

Researchers have been interested in emergency education since the COVID-19 outbreak (ex., [11][12][13]). Sofianidis et al. [14] argue that the COVID-19 pandemic created unique opportunities for the digital transformation of education, but at the same time, it has highlighted various shortcomings of the current educational system. They further argue that there are needs to overcome the challenges of digital education to effectively utilize the educational potential of digital technologies, especially distance, online and blended learning.

According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean—United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ECLAC-UNESCO), by mid-May 2020, more than 1.2 billion students at all levels of education worldwide had stopped having face-to-face classes [15]. ECLAC-UNESCO [15] reported that even before the pandemic came, the social situation in the region was deteriorating due to rising rates

of poverty, the persistence of inequalities and growing social discontent. This economic situation had a negative impact on the various social sectors, particularly education. The previous claim applies to Palestine, with its prevailing digital divide [16]. According to Schleicher [17], this digital divide is worsened in emergency education, since privileged students are able to make their way through closed school doors to alternative learning opportunities, while disadvantaged students are often shut out.

Researchers focused on the educational experiences in Palestine during emergency education. Shraim and Crompton [18] found that Palestinian teachers and decision-makers identified mobile devices, social media and cloud computing as tools for designing and delivering educational materials, as well as for communicating effectively during the COVID-19 epidemic. Moreover, Shraim and Crompton identified different challenges, including the expanding of education's digital divide and a negative attitude towards online learning.

3. Policies for Successful Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic

ECLAC-UNESCO [15] reported that actions taken by ministries of education of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean concerned different aspects of online learning, including the preparation of teachers for online learning. For example, Ecuador's Ministry of Education launched a teachers' course named "My Online Classroom" that was based on self-learning. Another aspect is the establishment of digital devices for teachers and students, as part of the digitalizing education. This establishment was sometimes achieved through loans to teachers. Moreover, ECLAC-UNESCO [15] says that countries established ways through various distance learning modes.

For the efficiency of the policy followed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal, Shrestha and Gnawali [19] analyzed the educational policy documents issued by the Ministry. The analysis revealed several strengths of the policy, such as planning to create data in terms of learners' access to resources, encouraging learners to value self-learning and parent education, and suggesting several alternative ways to resume school. Shrestha and Gnawali [19] recommended that in any future policy, teachers should have the autonomy to decide the course content in addition to creating the course content. The previous autonomy would enable teachers to comfortably and realistically meet the learning objectives of the curriculum and acknowledge their worthiness as teachers [19].

4. ICT-Based Education in Palestine

ICT-based education in Palestine was initiated and maintained by the involvement of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, by the Palestinian local support, and by European-funded projects. Below, it was elaborated on each of the local-support and European-funded initiatives and projects.

Wahbeh [20] studied ICT implementation in Palestinian schools. It was described the relationship, related to ICT in schools, between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), the local community or the parents' associations (PTAs), and the school administration. The description shows that the technical infrastructure for the

internet was provided by MoEHE and the PTA, with the help of the local community. It also reveals that, as a result of the Ministry of Education's bureaucratic measures, the schools were slowed in connecting to the internet.

Having explored how teachers use computer technology in schools and how the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education views computer integration into schools, Barham [21] concluded that the impact that computer technology can have depends on the design of the teaching and learning environment supporting student-centered learning. She recommended that the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education should work to develop classroom environments that integrate technology into the learning process. She stressed that the availability of internal resources will determine whether the Ministry can achieve this goal. Furthermore, she argued that the Ministry may need outside donations to accomplish its mission due to the lack of resources in the country. Thus, Barham [21] emphasizes two issues. Firstly, there were challenges with the integration of ICT in the Palestinian classroom, and secondly, in order to overcome these challenges, it was necessary to develop internal resources.

European-funded projects were carried out in Palestine with the help of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education to improve digital literacy and encourage the use of ICT in schools. Two of these projects were described here. The first project was funded by an Italian Cooperation, managed by the United Nations Development Program, and involved the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Pacetti [22] described the project as encouraging ICT use in Palestinian schools and universities. From the report of Pacetti, it was seen that universities took a main role in preparing appropriate materials, models of use of technology, and strategies for this use. Specifically, the University of Bologna had a main role in the project, implementing the ICT knowledge and critical practice in the schools and providing pedagogical models of the use of ICT, tools, and methodologies, which helped monitoring the pedagogical experimentation of the use of ICT in the classroom.

The second project was funded by the Belgian Development Agency (ENABLE) and involved the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. ENABLE [23] described the previous project as follows: "288 pilot schools participated and were rewarded with ICT material based on their own ICT-needs analysis. By the end of the project, a total of 1600 learning objects were developed by teachers in a successful bottom-up approach and uploaded to the teacher web portal developed by the Ministry of Education". Referring to the previous project, Traxler [24] says that in 2016, a set of Policy Papers were developed in the context of an E-learning project, jointly undertaken by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education and the Belgian Development Cooperation. The project aimed to introduce the use of ICT in the school curriculum to encourage the role of the student in the classroom, as well as acquiring 21st Century Skills in Palestine. Three were focused on school processes and the fourth focused on digital literacy. Traxler [24] argues that "The status of the Papers is unclear—they are certainly not policy—but these paragraphs represent a significant milestone" (p. 7).

5. Dimensions of Quality in the Administration of Education

Kivistö and Pekkola [25] utilized Harvey and Green's [26] framework for quality and the conceptualization of administration to develop a framework for quality education. This framework is composed of five dimensions. The

first dimension is called “Administrative quality as exceptionality/excellence”. In the first dimension, “tangible” factors are the one such as attractiveness and adequacy of facilities, but there is also need of a budget appropriate for the level of resources and well-qualified motivated staff. Here, benchmarking against an acceptable minimum set of standards is one of the ways to determine quality, at least to some degree. The second dimension is called “Administrative quality as perfection/consistency”. This dimension is concerned that aspects of administrative work must be reliable, accessible, and accurate. Aside from the level of service provided externally and internally, perfection also includes a level of responsiveness or staff willingness to assist. The third dimension is “Administrative quality as fitness for purpose”. This dimension refers to meeting the expectations of internal and external users for any administrative service. This dimension also refers to an academic institution’s ability and capacity to perform its mission and goals by fulfilling the purpose of its administration (or some part of it). The fourth dimension is “Administrative quality as value for money”. Here, quality is considered as being able to maximize the benefit from administrative services given limited resources, including monetary and human resources. The fifth dimension is “Administrative quality as transformation”. The fifth dimension considers whether the administration provided support for academic activities at universities, but they also proactively create conditions for academic excellence, financial success, and student needs—both at the same time.

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