Promoting Emotional Social Learning in Distance Learning through Book Creator

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Abstract: The COVID-19 lockdown has had emotional and psychological effects on students. The lockdown also compromised the ability of educational institutions to support social-emotional learning (SEL). The educational institutions stumble upon many challenges during that period as the semester continued while the students and teachers didn't arrive to the institution. This qualitative phenomenological study analyzed seven interviews in the interpretive approach of pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers learned via the Book Creator, which is a digital platform for creating and sharing digital books. Therefore, we asked: What characteristics of social-emotional learning were expressed, according to pre-service teachers' perception who used Book Creator? The findings indicate three themes: social learning, ethics in learning and humanistic assessment. The students indicated that proper use of the Book Creator can bridge the complexity of teaching and learning during the pandemic and integrate the social-emotional learning principles while emphasizing the importance of ethics in learning.

Keywords: Social-emotional learning, Pre-service teachers' education, Ethics in learning, Learning during COVID pandemic

Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, education systems operated under tight isolation measures. These conditions resonate the depth of the emotional and psychological consequences for most students following distance learning. Physical distance neutralizes personal approach, encourages a feeling of disconnection and social isolation. These negative emotions affect the process of acquiring knowledge and the involvement and motivation for learning. In fact, the ability of educational institutions to provide an environment that supports social-

emotional learning)SEL(has been compromised. The definition of SEL is diverse. There are those who define SEL as skills, attitudes, behaviors, cognitions, and feelings of success in school and in adult life (,.Omasta et al ,Zins & Elias, 2006). Others define SEL as the importance of the process of developing effective life skills ;2020 through the ability to identify and manage emotions, develop concerns for others, establish constructive relationships and address challenging situations and solve problems effectively)Pekrun, 2017(. The NCSL)The National Conference of State Legislator) defines SEL as "a wide range of skills, attitudes and behaviors that can ,affect a student's success in school and in life". Critical thinking, emotion management, conflict management decision making, and work staff are all skills that are not necessarily measured by tests, although they are crucial components in a student's education. These skills may affect his/her academic success, employment ability, self-esteem, relationships and civic and community involvement.

Research Questions

What characteristics of SEL were manifested during distance learning during the COVID-19 lockdown, according to the perception of the students who used BC?

Method

In this phenomenological qualitative study, which used the interpretive approach, seven interviews of students from the Department of Sciences at one of the largest teacher-training colleges in Israel were analyzed. The analysis of the findings was conducted through first and second coding analyses and the creation of categories that arose inductively from the interpretive analysis of the data)Saldaña, 2009).

Research Context

As an attempt to address the challenges of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, a number of courses in the Department of Sciences at one of the largest teacher-training colleges in Israel used the Book Creator (BC). BC is a digital space for creating and sharing digital books. The lecturer opens a virtual bookshelf and shares it with the students. The students are required to open their own book, design it and add pages and content to it. It is possible to add texts, links, voice, images, and videos to each page. In addition, the virtual bookshelf is exposed for viewing by all course participants. The use of BC was created as a tool for ongoing alternative assessment. The lecturer administers the assignments through video and/or voice recordings.

Results

 Theresults .indicate three main themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. The first - social learning ,Regarding the possibility of watching the products of their classmates, one of the students stated: "... this learning from someone else, is like learning from a teacher. You want to see where you went wrong and where you were right. People want to learn together. You do not want a teacher to tell you that, I think this way is the way we

learn best or "profit from each other". The citations show the importance of peer learning for the development of knowledge acquisition and those students understand the importance of social learning and peer learning as a substitute or complementary to teaching from the lecturer only.

The second theme - ethics in learning. During their learning and following their mutual exposure to the products of their classmates, a kind of internal ethical discourse developed among the students: "You have finished your work ... it's open…, it's inspiring… of course, don't ever steal anything or take anything from anyone else or copy verbatim, ever. No. But I see it as something very instructive ... ". From the quote it can be understood that the student describes the development of a learning culture based on the principles of academic ethics, which are not necessarily applied by the students in all institutions of higher education.

The third theme - humanistic assessment. For example, the student states that watching the video uploaded by the lecturer through BC, as part of the assessment process and feedback on assignments, evoked positive emotions ,in the evaluation process as expressed in her remarks: "It's really feedback when you see his facial expressions .you know if he's laughing or not, you know what needs to be improved. He says hello, it's much more human It's definitely awfully fun to watch, even the lecturer". In her words, the student emphasizes that using the tools available in BC, the lecturer was able to bridge the physical distance created by distance learning and create human closeness.

Discussion

During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, education systems and academia underwent an emotional roller coaster and experienced many changes. The use of BC as a tool for student perceptions, has been found to be a platform that invites socio-constructive learning that addresses the limitations of distance learning and learning, by addressing the emotional and social aspects of learning and assessment. According to the students, the BC is able to address emotional and social aspects, which form the basis for SEL, by serving as a platform for sharing learning outcomes. The testimony of students is especially important in teacher-training institutions because the rationale of teacher training is based on creating a model for teaching based on personal predestination that includes interpersonal, such as teacher-student interactions and between the students themselves in a peer-learning format. These are recognized from the literature, as encouraging motivation for learning.

Conclusion

Social learning, ethics in learning and humanistic assessment, the themes found in this study, correspond to the three bases for education. The issue of fairness is compatible with ethics in learning, the basis of humanity is compatible with humanistic assessment and the basis for dialogue is compatible with social learning.

- Ethics in learning is an important issue as students were examined at home during the COVID-19

lockdown. When students are being evaluated while staying at home, they might tend tocopy from each other In the case of this study, it appears that the use of BC obviates the need for students to engage in . the subject of copying.

- The lack of human contact during the online teaching period was one of the major issues .T he BC interface enabled the opportunity for an emotional andhumanistic relationship between the lecturer and the students.

- It was challenging to overcome the physicaldistance between the teacher and the pre service teachers, while learning remotely. The ability to create teacher-student and student-student dialogue was compromised. The BCenable dialoguebetween them.

In conclusion, the findings of this study illustrate that through proper use of BC it is possible to bridge the complexity of teaching and learning during the lockdown and distance learning period as well as to integrate educational foundations based on SEL principles and emphasizing learning ethic values.

Contribution and Limitations

This research has a theoretical and applied contribution. At the theoretical level the research has helped to expand the knowledge regarding distance learning coping in institutions of higher education. In practical terms, the study added knowledge that may aid in understanding how digital tools are used and utilizing their characteristics to increase engagement and motivation for learning among pre-service teachers in institutions of higher education in distance learning. The study has a number of limitations related to the size of the sample based on one institution of higher education as well as the number of interviews conducted.

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