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Interaction and cognitive engagement in online discussions in professional development leadership and management course at a private nursing institution

Nimira Asif, Samina Vertejee and Sharifa Lalani
Aga Khan University, Pakistan

In the Post RN BScN curriculum, one of the courses “Professional Development and Leadership (PDLM)” was offered as blended mode for the first time. In order to explore the students’ interactions and cognitive engagement (CE) in online discussion forums (ODFs), the research team conducted a retrospective study for the first time at a private nursing institution of Karachi-Pakistan. The study was conducted by utilizing the retrospective qualitative paradigm of discourse analysis to understand student’s CE in ODFs. The study has addressed the following 1 main and 3 subsidiary research questions: How do threaded discussions (in the part of online forums) enable or hinder the student’s level of cognitive engagement in a blended learning course (PDLM course)? All the course enrollees were invited to participate in the study; 24 of 81 students provided the written consent to participate in the study. The participants of the research study were both males and females; of which males were (20.8%) whereas females were (79.2%). However, only (92.3%) of the participants’ completed the Online Monkey Survey tool for demographic details. The data was collected after the university’s ethical review committee’s clearance. The scripts of ODFs from 2 online modules (named as Module A & B) were used for this study, which were triangulated through focus group discussions (FGDs). The researchers used discourse analysis to explore the interrelations between words and the context in which the words are used. This assisted in establishing the links to determine the patterns of interaction and the levels of CE of the learners. Levels and categories of CE defined by Zhu (2006) were used as a guideline for discourse analysis of the discussion forums of two modules. Categories were assigned various levels to understand the specific kinds of interactions as explained within the selected analytical framework. The categories and levels included question type I and II, statements type I-VI, reflection type I and II, mentoring and scaffolding. It is observed from the results that majority of the participants used statements type I which is responding to the direct questions, whereas, seeking clarifications (either question type I or II) was not much observed. Mentoring and scaffolding are higher levels of CE, however, only less number of responses was observed in both the modules A and B. Moreover, study participants reported high level of engagement with the positive role of faculty facilitation and felt more comfortable in participating through a virtual learning environment. It was recommended to set netiquettes, to have sound training to those learners whose ICT skills need improvement and to consider in-depth key informant interviews with each research participant soon after they posted a comment on ODF, will bring more insight in understanding CE.

Biography

Nimira Asif has completed her BScN in 2005 from Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery (AKU-SONAM). Then she worked as an Obstetrics and Gynecology Nurse and became Clinical Nurse Instructor of the unit. She joined Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) as a student of MEd with specialization in Educational Leadership and Management. She graduated from IED in 2011 with thesis on “Creative Thinking for Educational Leaders”. Since her completion of Master’s degree, she is working at AKU-SONAM as a Senior Instructor, teaching nursing courses in undergraduate programs. Along with her teaching responsibility, she was curriculum co-chair, member of student hand book committee and currently she is serving as co-chair of Admission and Progression Committee of the school. In her voluntary capacity, she is also serving as a Chairperson of School Health program from a platform of Professional Teacher Association Network (PTAN), which was derived from a project of strengthening teachers (a government funded project). Another voluntary work is her service to Aga Khan Ismaili Council for Pakistan as an Early Child Portfolio for the community nationwide. She is also serving as Co-chair of membership Involvement committee in Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) Rho Delta Chapter.

nimira.asif@aku.edu

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