Opinions of Prospective Social Studies Teachers on Distance Education during the Pandemic Process

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to identify the views and experiences of pre-service social studies teachers towards distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research is important for understanding the effects of the pandemic on the field of education, evaluating the advantages and challenges of distance education, and drawing lessons from these experiences for future educational practices. This research was conducted by preparing a semi-structured interview form from qualitative research methods. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis technique. According to the findings, the difficulties experienced by some pre-service social studies teachers in accessing technology were emphasized. It was stated that these problems were more evident especially in schools in rural areas. Some pre-service teachers had inadequacies in using technology effectively and stated that distance education could affect student motivation. They stated that distance education increased pre-service teachers' access to various teaching materials and resources. Pre-service social studies teachers observed that in-class interaction decreased in distance education. Preservice teachers' access to technology and their skills are important factors to consider in terms of student motivation, instructional materials and student interaction. University authorities can make improvements in these areas to make distance education processes more effective.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused drastic changes in the field of education, and distance education has become the new reality for students and educators. Pre-service social studies teachers also had to complete their education during this period (Kanuka Collett, & Caswell, 2002). In this process, distance education has played a key role for students and teachers to continue their education process (Huang, 2000). Pre-service social studies teachers had to adapt to this changing educational environment and maintain their teaching practice (Dron, 2007). In this article, a research design will be proposed to examine pre-service social studies teachers' views on distance education during the pandemic (Keegan, 2003).

Distance Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Prospective Social Studies Teachers

During the pandemic, distance education has faced a number of challenges and opportunities. In evaluating this new educational model, pre-service social studies teachers addressed the following issues:

Teachers' Technology Skills: Research has shown that some teachers lack the ability to use technology effectively. Educators may need to improve these skills (Bates, 2005).

Student Motivation: Social studies teachers indicated that distance education can affect student motivation. Teachers developed new strategies to encourage students' participation in distance education (Bayır & Mahiroglu, 2017; Cakir, Ozturk, Unal, 2019; Onat & Bertiz, 2023; Ozturk & Susuz, 2023; Ozturk, 2023).

Teaching Materials and Resources: Distance education has increased teachers' access to a variety of teaching materials and resources. However, it is important to use these resources effectively (Wikeley & Muschamp, 2004).

Student Interaction: Social studies teachers observed that classroom interaction decreased in distance education. Therefore, they developed new strategies to encourage collaboration and discussion among students (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan & Worthy, 1996).

Method

This research was prepared using content analysis technique, one of the qualitative research methods. The study group of the research was carried out with 12 pre-service social studies teachers studying at Süleyman Demirel University Faculty of Education. The data were collected through a structured interview form. The collected data were subjected to content analysis.

Results

Technological Infrastructure and Access: During the pandemic, pre-service teachers, especially those without technological infrastructure and internet access, experienced difficulties in accessing distance education.

Lack of Interaction with Students: Pre-service social studies teachers had fewer opportunities to connect with students due to the lack of in-class interaction. Classroom interaction can help students understand the topics better.

Motivation Issues: Distance education can create a lack of motivation for students and the pre-service teachers faced this challenge. Interaction and group work in the classroom can increase students' motivation.

Assessment and Exams: There was uncertainty about how assessment and exams would be conducted in distance education. Student teachers may be concerned that this may not prevent student failure.

Social Justice: Distance learning can increase social injustice. Economically disadvantaged students may become disadvantaged due to technological inequality.

Conclusion

During the pandemic, pre-service social studies teachers' views on distance education reflect new realities and challenges in education. Educational institutions should provide support for pre-service teachers to cope with these challenges and find solutions to implement distance education more effectively. This process can encourage future teachers to be more flexible and adaptable and contribute to the transformation of education systems. The pandemic process has shown that transformation in education is inevitable. Examining pre-service social studies teachers' views on distance education can help us understand the effects of this change process in education. The research design proposed in this article can contribute to a better understanding of pre-service social studies teachers' distance education experiences and the effects of these experiences on their future teaching practice.

This research has helped us to better understand the distance education experiences of social studies teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers' access to technology and their skills are important factors to consider in terms of student motivation, instructional material and student interaction. Educators can make improvements in these areas to make distance education processes more effective.

Recommendations

Technological Infrastructure and Access: Educational institutions should provide technological infrastructure and facilitate internet access to prospective teachers and students.

Educational Materials: Pre-service teachers should prepare original and interesting educational materials in order to be more effective in distance education.

Interaction and Communication: Preservice teachers should frequently interact with students and create interactive learning opportunities such as discussions and group work on online platforms.

Motivational Strategies: Student teachers should develop different strategies to motivate students. It is important to provide feedback and encouragement to students.

Social Justice: Educational institutions should provide support to economically disadvantaged students to

maintain social justice. Student teachers can offer extra help to these students.

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