Chapter 3

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ABSTRACT

As more universities move towards a distance mode of teaching and learning, there are increasing opportunities to enroll students from a greater diversity of backgrounds. Often students have commitments that include family responsibilities and/or professional career engagements that make it difficult to physically attend classes. This chapter accounts for how digital technologies have been instrumental in supporting learning for postgraduate students in a Kazakhstani university school context. The authors present a qualitative account of research framed around Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, where data was collected through unstructured interviews with purposefully selected faculty members and postgraduate students in one of the blended teaching and learning courses.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of inclusive education is to make teaching and learning accessible to all students regardless of their diverse abilities and needs. This process is being reconceptualized as more innovative teaching and learning designs are put in place to offer support to a greater diversity of students. Inclusive learning spaces are often characterized by the use of digital and other forms of technology to tap into their potential in making teaching and learning accessible and thus more inclusive. The transformation of teaching and learning spaces has dominated the discourse of curriculum and pedagogical designs to date. Educational institutions are expected to keep pace with the challenges of students with diversified abilities and needs as well as making teaching and learning spaces easily accessible. The current era of digitization has required a transformation in the way teaching and learning is being imagined. As more universities move toward a blended mode of course presentations which call for the extended use of digital technologies, there is growing interest among education practitioners to understand how digital technologies could be effectively used to support and enhance inclusive teaching and learning.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Bourdieu is central in understanding how learning and teaching are framed within what he calls educational ‘habitus’. Habitus according to Bourdieu is a set of internalized dispositions within an individual or a group which determine how they will think and act (Brubaker, 1993). With habitus the agents (which are actors) conform to the principles and values privileged within the habitus (Nash, 1990). Such principles and values are embedded within the cultural capital which is fundamental and is transferred to new socialized members within the habitus (Tittenbrun, 2016). The habitus thus acts as a mediator and regulator of activities by the agents.

The digitization of learning and teaching spaces produces a habitus and amasses a unique kind of cultural capital which enables agents to be socialized within the habitus. The transference of this capital to other forms of habitus such as intellectual habitus is crucial for understanding the regulatory nature of the habitus itself (Brubaker 1993). The habitus puts forward a modus operandi as the way or method, and an opus operatum as the product or resulting outcome. The notion of modus operandi in a technologically digitized teaching and learning suggests some form of actions normative to dispositions framed by habitus. The present study sought to
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