

Social Impact Analysis of Inclusive Education Policy through the Perspective of Online Community Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the social impact of inclusive education policies through the perspective of online educational communities. The method used is a systematic literature review with a qualitative approach, analyzing relevant studies from various academic databases. The results show that online communities play a crucial role in raising awareness of inclusive education, changing attitudes towards disabilities, bridging the gap between policy and practice, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and support among stakeholders. These findings highlight the importance of considering the dynamics of online communities in the development and implementation of inclusive education policies. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers and education practitioners on how to leverage digital platforms to support the transformation towards a more inclusive education system.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become a major focus in global education system reforms, aiming to create fair and equitable learning environments for all learners, including those with special needs. This policy reflects a paradigm shift from a segregation model to integration and inclusion in education (UNESCO, 2020). However, the implementation of this policy is not free from various challenges and complex social impacts. The development of information and communication technology has changed the landscape of social interaction, including in the context of education. Online educational communities have emerged as important platforms for sharing experiences, knowledge, and opinions on various education issues, including inclusive education (Smith & Jones, 2022). These platforms offer a unique perspective on how inclusive education policies are received, interpreted, and implemented by various stakeholders.

Analyzing the social impact of inclusive education policies through the lens of online communities can provide valuable insights into the social dynamics that occur outside the formal school environment. Online discussions often reflect broader public sentiment and can reveal challenges and opportunities that may not be visible in official reports or traditional research (Brown, 2023). Online educational communities also serve as spaces for dialogue between educators, parents, students, and policymakers. These interactions can influence public perceptions of inclusive education and in turn can impact policy implementation at the grassroots level (Garcia & Lee, 2021). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of these online communities is important in evaluating the effectiveness and acceptance of inclusive education policies. The social impacts of inclusive education policies can manifest in many forms, from changing attitudes toward disability to transforming school culture. Online communities are often the places where these impacts are

articulated and openly discussed, providing a more realistic picture of how the policies affect the daily lives of school communities (Wilson, 2023).

However, it is important to note that online representations do not always accurately reflect offline realities. Selection bias, echo chambers, and disinformation can influence online discussions and potentially provide a distorted picture of the true impacts of inclusive education policies (Taylor & Johnson, 2022). Therefore, critical analysis of online content is crucial in understanding these complex social dynamics. Inclusive education policies also impact the relationship between schools and communities. Online communities can serve as a bridge, facilitating dialogue between schools and the wider community. Analysis of these interactions can reveal how inclusive policies affect social cohesion and community participation in education (Mesra, 2024).

In addition, online educational communities often serve as a source of support and resources for educators and parents in implementing inclusive practices. Sharing experiences and strategies through digital platforms can accelerate the spread of best practices and innovations in inclusive education (Lopez & Kim, 2023). Furthermore, analysis of online communities can reveal gaps between planned policies and the reality of their implementation. Online discussions often raise practical issues and day-to-day challenges that may have been overlooked in policy formulation, providing valuable feedback to policymakers for future policy refinement and adaptation (Chen, 2022). A study by Rahman et al. (2021) explored the role of online communities in shaping teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Using content analysis of online discussion forums for teachers, the study found that interactions in virtual communities significantly influenced teachers' attitudes and practices in implementing inclusive education. However, this study was limited to the teacher perspective and did not consider the perspectives of other stakeholders.

Meanwhile, Martinez and Lee (2023) conducted a longitudinal study on the impact of inclusive education policies on school social climate, using data from school social media platforms. They found a positive correlation between the implementation of inclusive policies and increased social cohesion in the school environment. However, this study focused on the internal impact of schools and did not consider the broader community perspective. Although previous studies have provided valuable insights on the impact of inclusive education policies and the role of online communities in the educational context, there is a gap in understanding how online communities can serve as a lens to comprehensively analyze the social impacts of these policies. Most previous studies tend to focus on one stakeholder group or a particular aspect of policy implementation, without considering the complex interactions between various actors in the inclusive education ecosystem.

This study aims to fill this gap by adopting a holistic approach to analyzing the social impacts of inclusive education policies through the perspective of online educational communities. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of big data analysis from various online community platforms with traditional qualitative research methods, allowing for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how inclusive education policies are perceived, negotiated, and impacted by various levels of society. This study has significant significance in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the social impacts of inclusive education policies, which can inform future policy formulation and refinement. By leveraging the richness of data from online communities, this study can reveal social dynamics that may not be visible in conventional research methods, thereby making a valuable contribution to the inclusive education literature and education policy analysis (Wong, 2024).

2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on a systematic literature review to analyze the social impact of inclusive education policies through the perspective of online educational communities. This method was chosen because of its ability to capture the nuances and complexities of social phenomena related to the implementation of inclusive education policies in a digital context. A systematic literature review will be conducted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol to ensure a rigorous and transparent process (Moher et al., 2019). A literature search will be conducted on leading academic databases such as ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using a combination of relevant keywords such as “inclusive education”, “educational policy”, “social impact”, “online community”, and “educational social media”.

The inclusion criteria for the literature to be reviewed include: (1) peer-reviewed articles published in the last 10 years, (2) studies focusing on the social impact of inclusive education policies, (3) research involving the analysis of online communities or digital platforms in educational contexts, and (4) studies conducted across different geographical and socio-cultural contexts to ensure diverse perspectives. The screening and selection process of articles will be conducted by two researchers independently to reduce bias. Disagreements will be resolved through discussion and, if necessary, involving a third researcher as a mediator. Data from selected articles will be extracted using a standardized data extraction form, covering information such as research objectives, methodology, key findings, and implications related to the social impact of inclusive education policies.

Thematic analysis will be used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This process will involve repeated reading of the selected literature, coding relevant data, and developing emerging themes. These themes will provide a framework for understanding how online communities reflect and influence the social impact of inclusive education policies. To increase the validity of the study, triangulation methods will be applied by comparing findings from different sources and types of studies. This will help in identifying convergences and divergences in the literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Denzin, 2023). In addition, a critical analysis of the methodology and context of each reviewed study will be conducted to assess the quality of the evidence and its relevance to the research question. This will help identify strengths and limitations in the current knowledge base as well as areas that require further research.

Finally, a narrative synthesis will be used to integrate findings from across studies and generate a coherent understanding of the social impacts of inclusive education policies through the lens of online communities. This synthesis will consider variations in context, methodology, and findings across studies to produce a nuanced and comprehensive picture of the research topic (Popay et al., 2022).

3. Result and Discussion

a. Result

Analysis of the reviewed literature revealed several key themes related to the social impact of inclusive education policies through the perspective of online educational communities. First, there is an increased awareness and understanding of inclusive education among members of

online communities. Discussions taking place on digital platforms have facilitated the exchange of information and experiences that have enriched collective understanding of inclusive practices. Second, online communities have become catalysts for changing attitudes towards disability and diversity in school settings. Sharing success stories and challenges of implementing inclusive policies has helped reduce stigma and increase acceptance of learners with special needs. The third theme that emerged was the role of online communities in bridging the gap between policy and practice. Digital platforms have become spaces where educators, parents, and other stakeholders can share practical strategies for implementing inclusive policies in everyday contexts.

Fourth, the analysis revealed that online communities have contributed to the formation of informal support networks for educators and parents. Discussion forums and social media groups have become important sources of emotional and practical support, especially for those facing challenges in implementing inclusive education. The fifth theme identified was the role of online communities in highlighting gaps and challenges in policy implementation. Online discussions often raise issues that are not addressed in official policies, providing valuable feedback for policymakers. Sixth, it was found that online communities have facilitated cross-sector collaboration in supporting inclusive education. Digital platforms have enabled dialogue between schools, civil society organizations, and the private sector in developing innovative solutions to inclusive education challenges.

Seventh, the analysis shows that online communities have played a role in accelerating the diffusion of innovations in inclusive education practices. New ideas and methods spread quickly through digital networks, allowing for faster adaptation and refinement of inclusive practices. Lastly, it was found that online communities have contributed to the formation of new professional identities for educators in the context of inclusive education. Through online interactions, educators develop a shared understanding of their role as facilitators of inclusive learning, which in turn influences their classroom practices.

b. Discussion

These findings can be further analyzed through the lens of educational management theory and digital communication theory. From the perspective of educational change management theory proposed by Fullan (2020), online communities can be seen as important catalysts in the systemic change process necessary for effective implementation of inclusive education. Fullan emphasizes the importance of building capacity and creating coherence in education systems, and online communities appear to play a significant role in both of these aspects. The diffusion of innovation theory developed by Rogers (2018) in the context of digital communication also provides a useful framework for understanding how ideas and practices related to inclusive education spread through online networks. The role of online communities as effective communication channels for spreading innovations aligns with Rogers' concept of the importance of interpersonal networks in the process of innovation adoption. The impact of online communities on the formation of attitudes and social norms related to inclusive education can be explained through the theory of social influence in the digital context proposed by Cialdini and Goldstein (2019). They argue that online interactions can shape strong social norms, which in turn influence individual and group behavior.

The role of online communities in bridging the gap between policy and practice reflects the concept of "street-level bureaucracy" proposed by Lipsky (2021). In the digital context, educators and other stakeholders can be seen as "digital street-level bureaucrats" who interpret and implement policies through their online interactions. The formation of informal support networks through online communities is in line with the theory of social capital in the digital context

discussed by Putnam (2017). Putnam argues that online interactions can build valuable social capital, which in this context supports the implementation of inclusive education.

The findings on the role of online communities in highlighting policy gaps reflect the concept of “policy feedback” discussed by Howlett et al. (2022). They emphasize the importance of feedback mechanisms in the policy cycle, and online communities appear to serve as Effective feedback channels in the context of inclusive education policies. Finally, the contribution of online communities to the formation of new professional identities for educators can be analyzed through the lens of social learning theory in digital environments proposed by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020). They argue that online communities of practice can be powerful spaces for professional identity development and collaborative learning.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals the significant role of online communities in shaping and reflecting the social impact of inclusive education policies. Through a systematic analysis of the existing literature, it is found that digital platforms not only serve as discussion spaces, but also as catalysts for attitude change, facilitators for policy implementation, and sources of support for stakeholders in inclusive education. Online communities have bridged the gap between policy and practice, accelerated the diffusion of innovations, and contributed to the formation of new professional identities in the context of inclusive education. These findings have important implications for policymakers, education practitioners, and researchers. They highlight the importance of considering the dynamics of online communities in designing, implementing, and evaluating inclusive education policies. This study also paves the way for further studies on the role of digital technologies in supporting the transformation of education systems towards greater inclusion. By understanding and harnessing the potential of online communities, we can create a more holistic and effective approach to realizing the vision of inclusive education.

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