


Switching to Online Medical Education: The Minority Perspective – A Response to Mariyah Bashir [Response to Letter]

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Dear editor

I have read the letter carefully and want to share my thoughts on education equality with Mariyah Bashir because education equality happens to be one of my interests.

First of all, my paper tried to focus on the general situation and major problems of online medical education so it is hard to cover every aspect thoroughly. Speaking of ethnic minorities. Students of different ethnic groups sit in the same classroom and take the same in-person classes. That is also the case of online education delivery. Therefore, most needs of ethnic minorities are roughly the same compared with that of the ethnic majorities. The root cause of education inequality, including the inequality among different ethnic groups, is a topic worth discussing.

According to the 7th census of China conducted in 2020, the proportion of minority ethnic people has risen 0.4% to 8.89% compared with that of 2010.¹ Although the number of minority ethnic people rose 10.26% over the past ten years, most of them still live in Western China - a comparatively underdeveloped area. During the online education period, I have interviewed many ethnic minorities, who lived in countryside incapable of learning online due to the unstable network. Besides, so many students have to stand the “always-loading” online courses on their \$150 cellphones because they cannot afford a better learning gadget. The economic inferiority of the students, and the infrastructure flaws in underdeveloped areas where they live, have made the education inequality issue even more serious, especially in the context of online medical education.

Therefore, ethnic minorities' access to online education is indeed worse than that of the majority Han Chinese. The reason resulting in this fact should be made clear. As far as I am concerned, the online education inequality, arises from the gap between rich and poor, not from their ethnic backgrounds. On the one hand, poor governments of underdeveloped areas that were incapable of building more base stations could not offer good networks and even adequate electricity. On the other hand, less active economy of ethnic minorities' hometown resulted in their comparatively low income. Therefore, I suggest the government, especially in developing countries, to step up infrastructure before mass promotion. Otherwise, the disparity between cities and villages would exacerbate inequality of education after the shift to online education. Raising the income of the minorities so as to limit the inequality of education would be another field of topic. All in all, I have always

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been thinking how to ameliorate the situation of education inequality. However, if the society does not solve the economic cause of online education inequality, other solutions are only minor repairs to the problem.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

Reference

1. Bulletin of the Seventh National Census (No. 2). National Bureau of Statistics. Available from: http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/tjgb/rkpcgb/qgrkpcgb/202106/t20210628_1818821.html. Accessed September 15, 2021.

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<https://doi.org/10.2147/AMEPS339419>