

**This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.**

**Author(s):** Sebbowa, Dorothy Kyagaba; Kontinen, Tiina

**Title:** Enhancing social justice? : Experimenting with social media in preservice teacher education at Makerere University in Uganda

**Year:** 2024

**Version:** Published version

**Copyright:** © 2024 the Authors

**Rights:** CC BY 4.0

**Rights url:** <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

**Please cite the original version:**

Sebbowa, D. K., & Kontinen, T. (2024). Enhancing social justice? : Experimenting with social media in preservice teacher education at Makerere University in Uganda. In V. Engström, M. Mustaniemi-Laakso, & L. Stark (Eds.), *Social Justice Innovation in Africa* (pp. 129-146). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003452423-12>

# 8 Enhancing social justice? Experimenting with social media in preservice teacher education at Makerere University in Uganda

*Dorothy Kyagaba Sebbowa and Tiina Kontinen*

## Introduction

This chapter investigates the use of social media tools in teacher education as a potential avenue for enhancing social justice in education and beyond, with a particular example of using wikis in preservice teacher education at Makerere University, Uganda. The chapter builds on a broad definition of social innovation as a new combination of social practices with a goal of “better answering certain needs and problems” compared with the existing practices (Howaldt & Hochgerner 2018, 18). The notion of social innovation has gained attention in scholarship on educational innovations, which has traditionally focused on technological, pedagogical, and administrative innovations that can better enhance learning (Ramirez-Montoya 2020). Social innovations in education can refer to new constellations of actors, pedagogical practices, and educational discourses, which might include digital innovations (Fahrenwald et al. 2021), and they can occur at different scales, from comprehensive educational reforms to bottom-up experimentations of doing something differently.

Social innovations can potentially enhance social justice (Joel & Nel-Sanders 2021; Jost & Kay 2010). In educational research, the notion of social justice has been discussed in different yet intertwined ways. First, social justice has been defined as an educational goal, reflecting the best ways to cultivate students’ commitment to it in their future lives (Brown 2004). Second, social justice has been used in reference to pedagogical relationships and classroom practices in a quest to identify non-hierarchical, dialogical, and inclusive pedagogies (Anwarudinn 2019). Third, in a more specific context of teacher education, the question of how to best ensure that graduates are ready to support awareness of social justice among pupils in their future professional careers as educators has been discussed (Allen & Wright 2014).

This chapter focuses on social justice in the pedagogical relationship within preservice teacher education, potentially leading to students’ commitment to social justice in their own pedagogical practices when educating future citizens. We study the question in the specific context of Makerere University,

Uganda, with a focus on teaching the subject of history for preservice teachers. The chapter investigates the use of social media, more precisely wikis, as pedagogical tools in teacher education. Wikis are interlinked web pages that allow multiple authors to collaboratively store, add, and edit content and invite dialogical conversations between teachers and students (Samalieva 2018). Wikis as promising social media platforms can potentially change the nature of teacher–student interaction and provide space for voices from students of different backgrounds to be heard.

While digital platforms have gained a lot of attention as *technical* educational innovations, in this chapter we look at their use as a *social* innovation. We contend that while the wiki is profoundly a technological innovation, experimenting the wiki as a pedagogical tool in teaching the subject of history for preservice teachers can be considered as a social innovation that potentially initiates new practices to address two identified challenges related to social justice. The first challenge is the prevailing hierarchical pedagogical relationships within classrooms, often perceived as a legacy of colonial education practices (Takako 2011; Adebisi 2016). These relationships emphasize the authority of teachers and often conceive learning as transferring knowledge from teachers to students rather than involving collaborative and dialogic learning. The second challenge relates to the multi-ethnic societal landscape of Uganda, from where the preservice teachers come from and where they will later conduct their professional careers. This landscape is characterized by diverse cultures, over 50 spoken languages, as well as disparities in social justice when it comes to economic and political power and the consequent possibilities to practice active citizenship (Alava et al. 2020). Uganda is known for the politicization of ethnicity, with the exercise of political patronage based on loyalty that often follows ethnic lines and with a militarization of the polity with varying strength in different parts of the country (Anderson & Fisher 2016; Titeca 2018). As a result, certain ethnic groups are marginalized in society, such as the Batwa of Bundibugyo and the Kuku of Yumbe districts (Uganda Human Rights Commission 2009).

The experimentation with wikis as a pedagogical tool as discussed in this chapter potentially promotes social justice through increased dialogue and democratic participation in the educational context (Soliman 2011). It can do so, first, regarding teacher–student relationships through promoting dialogue rather than hierarchical knowledge transfer and, second, by providing space for voices from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Research has shown that wikis are able to support collaborative learning in teacher education (Biasutti 2017; Biasutti & El-Deghaidy 2012). Rather than focusing on learning, this chapter asks how local social innovation – a new practice of using wikis as a pedagogical tool in a particular way in a specific context – can enable novel pedagogical relationships and inclusion of diverse ethnic voices and, hence, potentially contribute to social justice within a classroom and beyond. In what follows, we first review discussions on social justice in educational research and in connection with using social media, focusing on wikis. After that, we describe

our case study and the methods used and then proceed to the findings. In conclusion, we reflect on the wider possibilities of using social media tools in enhancing social justice in contexts like Uganda.

### **Enhancing social justice (in) education**

In educational research, the notion of social justice is used in a wide variety of intertwined and overlapping ways. In their introduction to the special issue on *Global and Local Perspectives on Social Justice*, Chapman (2013) articulates differences between the terms “social justice education”, “social justice pedagogy”, and “social justice in education”, of which the last one is seen as an umbrella term in reference to a wide variety of actions to create more just educational spaces and foster critical engagement in society. The two former terms refer more precisely to the use of social justice as a pedagogical approach, with the aim of educating students to become active and critical actors in their own lives. In reference to Chapman’s elaboration, this chapter mainly discusses *social justice pedagogy* while scrutinizing the potential of a particular social innovation, the wikis, to enhance social justice in a specified educational setting. However, it also contributes to the wider ideas concerning *social justice in education*, reflecting on the possible future engagements inspired by a particular pedagogical experience.

Based on our literature review on the use of the notion “social justice” in extant educational research, we identified three angles that are relevant for our analysis. The first angle approaches social justice mainly as an educational goal for cultivating pupils’ and students’ commitment to appreciate and enhance social justice in their lives. The second perspective primarily discusses social justice as a feature of pedagogical relationship and classroom practice. The third raises a more specific debate on how to educate future teachers in a way that they will be able and willing to practice social justice and support awareness on it in their future professional careers.

The first angle, understanding social justice as an educational goal, relates to the vision of a just society where the currently educated future citizens will contribute to social justice, for instance by promoting rights of those oppressed and marginalized in society (Wade 2003), as well as by struggling to remove social inequalities and make society more democratic (Kukulska-Hulme et al. 2022). Such educated citizens are “justice-oriented” (Swalwell 2013) and pose cultural awareness and sensitivity (Brown 2004). In the world characterized by cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, citizenship education promoting social justice should strike a balance between cultural diversity and national unity (Banks 2004). Critical awareness is also needed for building democratic and inclusive societies and for identifying colonial legacies that hinder equality in education and society (Stein & Andreotti 2016). In general, the goal of social justice education has been defined as to “enable individuals and groups to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand the structural features of oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems as

well as the skills to effect democratic change” and thus being willing and able “to change the oppressive patterns and behaviors” (Bell 2022, 4). In the context of Uganda, such critical awareness could refer to a reflection of the colonial legacies in hierarchical educational practices and ethnic divides in society; the nature of the semi-authoritarian rather than democratic governance; the political power exercised by the different religions and ethnicity-based patronage networks; the differences in cultures and languages; and any other divisions and marginalization that hinder the fulfilment of social justice in society (Alava et al. 2020).

The second angle, scrutinizing social justice in pedagogy and classroom practices, refers to adopting anti-oppressive teaching practices (Kumashiro et al. 2004) and non-hierarchical pedagogical relationships (Anwaruddin 2019). In pedagogy characterized by social justice, both educators and students are equally valued, and students are seen as partners rather than objects of pedagogical process. This is based on principles such as a belief in everyone’s role as contributors to learning, the possibility of a cohesive classroom, and the aim of promoting change, as well as everyone taking responsibility over learning and teaching of others (Bettez 2011). To enable such relationships and just, student-centred classrooms, Wade (2009) offers various pedagogical strategies, pointing out how students’ lived experiences, concerns, hopes, and dreams should be nurtured in teaching, how building relationships embracing differences should be cultivated, and how classrooms should be arranged in ways that invite discussion, collaboration, and participation in a spirit of fairness. Bettez (2011) further identifies strategies of continuous facilitation of critical self-reflection, promoting responsibility and compassion over peer students, as well as acknowledging the role of emotions in learning. Overall, pedagogy should encourage students to apply their new knowledge and awareness (Mayhew & Fernández 2007) and acknowledge and be sensitive to the experiences of students coming from marginal communities or less-privileged societal groups (Bettez 2011). The practice of such collaborative and dialogic educational practices is not mainstream in Ugandan education at any level, and there is a lot to improve to open spaces for exchanging views and experiences between students, especially when it comes to the ethnic backgrounds less privileged in society.

The third angle focuses especially on teacher education. Higher education in general is considered as a potential space to cultivate deliberate and reflective encounters and, hence, to promote learning for social justice (Davids & Waghid 2016). Furthermore, educating future teachers is a significant opportunity to cultivate social justice, both as a form of pedagogy in their education and as an educational goal keeping an eye on their future profession, “learning to teach for social justice” (Enterline et al. 2008). Reagan and Hamnacher (2021) reviewed conceptual and empirical literature on teacher preparation for social justice during the period of 1999–2019 with a focus on preservice teachers and novice teachers’ opportunities and teaching experiences in formal teacher preparation in the USA and Canada. They identified key themes

such as identity, tensions between teacher preparation and school contexts, community, resistance, and emotions, which all influence the ways in which preservice teachers will engage with social justice in future.

### **Social media tools in enhancing social justice**

In the intersection of the three angles discussed above, the question of whether the use of social media tools in pedagogy can enhance social justice can be posed. Some evidence shows that tools such as wikis can support equity, social justice, and diversity in pedagogy (Marx & Kim 2019), as well as facilitate teaching social justice as an educational goal. For example, Gurthie and McCracken (2010) show how the use of social media tools functions in teaching social justice at a small midwestern institution in the USA, and Anwaruddin (2019) proposes a dialogic approach in language teaching facilitated by social media. Montelongo and Eaten (2020), who examined online pedagogical practices and technological tools in a graduate student online course focused on social justice and inclusion, argue that social media tools, such as discussion boards, video conferencing, and synchronous opportunities, influence students' engagement and learning and thus enhance social justice as a pedagogical practice.

In the USA, an impact-driven framework for Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) was developed to operationalize social justice initiatives concerning racial injustices and dismantling white privileges, Eurocentric legacy, and cultural minorities (Mehra 2022). The framework draws on interrelated questions namely: why (motivation), with whom (engaged constituencies), how (at external and internal wells to change traditional practices), and towards what (goal). Therefore, effective utilization of the ICT4D framework for social justice might contribute to the achievement of a just and democratic society (ibid). Similarly, research and development work with teachers in secondary school classrooms indicates that the use of social media tools can promote critical inquiry and reflective discourse in support of social justice pedagogies (O'Hara et al. 2016). Accordingly, Dirkin, Roberts, and Plevinski (2017) discussed the use of a curated list of podcasts with stories and voices from those typically not heard to introduce a social justice educational perspective into history classrooms. Preliminary findings revealed that podcasts shine a bright light on the power of voices while enhancing stories of those who experience history.

Wikis are web applications that allow multiple authors to collaboratively add and edit content. The most popular and useful example of a wiki is Wikipedia. The word wiki comes from Hawaiian and means fast or quick (Koniczny 2007, 16). Ward Cunningham created the first wiki in 1995, following the successful implementation of Wikipedia (Ibid 2007). Wikis invite dialogical conversations between teachers and students in assuming new roles as writers and reviewers (Maloy, Poirier & Edwards 2010). Plowman (2007) explored the use of wikis as an interactive space in the context of the American Studies

course “Diversity and Social Justice” and found that participants can construct a learning forum that is equitable to all participants. Thus, wikis as a media tool can provide a context where all participants have an equal opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge. In a similar vein, Soliman (2011) used social media technologies such as blogs, forums, and wikis to enhance learning in a teacher education programme, with the result that learning was conceived as a more positive and valuable experience.

Our key justification for using wikis in this research is that wikis can potentially facilitate, foster, and sustain collaborative versions of history from which meanings can be continually edited, iterated, and revised through a dialogic process of validation (Sebbowa 2016). This is relevant in dismantling authoritarian practices and creating harmony through shared negotiations focused on among students–students and students–educators at a particular time.

In our case, preservice teachers could easily work with wikis since no technical software is needed for their use and they can be easily edited. By default, wikis are designed to support interaction and, therefore, allow preservice teachers and educators to jointly edit anything in them (Ibid 2007). Moreover, wikis have been found to enhance students’ interest in history (Monte-Sano & Budano 2013) through interpreting images, videos, and pictures as representations from the past that can be sustained and transferred from one generation to another. This implies that wikis have the potential to mediate conversations between the past (relics left) and the present (students and educators). Wikis also possess educational affordances/potential uses that facilitate write-ability, share-ability, multiple content authoring, and peer review (Bower 2008). Wikis can potentially initiate creativity and innovation and thus provide a promising platform and pedagogical tool for the purposes of changing the nature of teacher–student interaction and of providing space for voices from students of different backgrounds to be heard. In addition, we engaged with a PBwiki as a type of wiki that provides multiple affordances to enable participative writing and editing of content, pictures, and videos (Bower 2008), with printable versions to work with content offline with multiple content authoring, thereby engaging in dialogue and shared meaning-making.

### **Methodology: the case of preservice teacher education at Makerere University**

We draw on empirical data generated from the first author’s PhD study entitled, “Towards a pedagogical framework for construction of historicity: A case of using wikis among pre-service teachers at Makerere University” (Sebbowa 2016). To examine how wikis as a social media tool can potentially facilitate collaboration, democratic participation, and inclusivity of all students in teacher education, a particular topic from the Ugandan Ordinary level (“O” level) curriculum was chosen: *Ethnicity in Uganda* with subtopics covering cultural heritages and citizenship. This topic was chosen keeping in mind that

some of the participants come from the ethnic minority groups who have experienced ignorance of their cultural practices, heritages and values, and exclusion from decision-making and active citizenship (Achan-Okitia 2015). Usually in teacher education, there is a very limited attempt to teach minority students about their own culture, citizenship, history, or traditions. To address this gap, the potential of the use of wiki to promote more democratic relationships and hearing of multiple ethnic voices was experimented among the preservice teachers taking history methods at Makerere University. In the experimentation, the first author designed a wiki meaning-making platform, identified a topic of study, and held face-to-face orientation meetings with the participants, as well as conducted interviews during the process. The research process will be discussed in more detail below.

### *Designing and implementing the wiki*

The process of designing a relevant wiki intervention and the choice of the wiki to that end were guided by an affordance analysis, which involves matching learning tasks with learning technology and properties that determine how things could possibly be used (Bower 2008). There are three different types of wikis: MediaWiki, Wikispaces, and PBwiki (Li 2012). All these three types were found to potentially facilitate online collaboration, encouraging creativity and critical analysis of peers' work, and include a history function to track changes (Martin & Kirthi 2010). However, although MediaWiki is a free server-based wiki with page-editing tools, it has been found to be somewhat challenging to learn and requires subscription and payment (Jakes 2006). Wikispaces on its behalf is a free page tool with specific pages reserved for educational purposes of which the editing rights are reserved for members only (Ibid. 2006). However, Wikispaces provides no printable version to enable work with the content offline and was therefore not selected as the interface for the wiki intervention. Instead, the PBwiki type interface was chosen as a replacement for Wikispaces. Our argument for engaging with the PBwiki type was that it provides multiple affordances of enabling participative writing and editing content, pictures, and videos with a printable offline version (Bower 2008).

As the first step in designing the wiki intervention, we set up a PBwiki site, read through the user guide, and listened to videos to gain a thorough understanding of how the site works. Secondly, we searched for other PBwiki sites that had been utilized for pedagogical purposes to get a sense of how this site worked. Thirdly, we read literature on the possibilities and challenges of engaging with this particular wiki type. The fourth step was to sign up for a PBwiki site and customize it to the Makerere University preservice teacher context.

The wiki intervention was carried out at a history method course directed at students in their second and third years of study that was facilitated by the first author. Participants in the study were recruited on a voluntary basis from students of the Bachelor of Arts with Education Degree at Makerere



University and were subsequently divided into cohorts. Each cohort was informed that the recruitment to join the PBwiki platform was voluntary, and students could register their names, emails, and mobile contacts to be used strictly for research purposes. Accounts for the PBwiki were created for those participants who had registered their emails, and invitations were sent to them to join the PBwiki platform. Additionally, the participants were requested to attend a face-to-face orientation workshop. The aim of the wiki intervention was to introduce the PBwiki learning environment to each cohort so that they would transfer their knowledge and skills to their future students. The PBwiki was introduced to the participants in the history method course that emphasizes the quality of learning history, citizenship, and social justice, with the aim to utilize the potential affordances of wikis in social justice pedagogy.

#### *Participant identification and face-to-face orientation workshop*

The face-to-face orientation workshop was designed for participants in the third year of their study. Out of the history education class of over 100 third-year students, only 20 volunteer participants turned up for the face-to-face training workshop. They exhibited a high interest in using emerging technologies in history pedagogy as they owned Internet-enabled devices and were present on social media platforms. The 20 volunteer participants are preservice teachers who took history as one of their teaching subjects. These participants were selected for two main reasons. First, it was assumed that those undertaking history could engage with reflective thinking and comprehend and debate various historical concepts and pedagogical issues. Second, from a pragmatic and technical perspective, the selected research participants needed to have an interest in using Internet-enabled devices and to be likely to use social media such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), and WhatsApp (Sebbowa 2016). Fulfilling these two conditions, the volunteered participants could purposefully engage with sharing experiences on ethnicity in Uganda to bring about democratic participation.

Given that there were ten functional computers available at the workshop venue, participants shared computers among themselves. Of the 20 participants, 14 signed into the PBwiki site, while six had problems signing in, as the system rejected their passwords. New accounts were created for them, and they eventually managed to sign in. This underlines the point made by Moule (2007) and Mokoena (2013), who advise online facilitators and teachers that technical guidance is always needed during online learning, as access has often proven to be a great challenge. In terms of interaction during the workshop, student–student interactions were observed as peers kept on asking each other questions about the PBwiki, and the students also consulted the educator. The workshop concluded with the educator/researcher requesting participants to engage in further questioning and seeking clarifications on the PBwiki site.

### *Process of identifying a historical topic*

At the face-to-face workshop, a third-year participant proposed *Ethnicity in Uganda* as the topic of the intervention, suggesting that it would help participants identify with their own cultures while appreciating other peoples' cultures. This topic was deemed important also because it covered the general content of history in Uganda; thus, participants would get a chance to talk about the history of their own cultures. Monte-Sano and Budano (2012) postulate that motivation and interest to learn about the past can be achieved by listening to students' ideas. The argument for engaging with *Ethnicity in Uganda* as an identified topic was seemingly appropriate for each participant's cultural inclinations, and all participants agreed on the choice. Also, the fact that this was a key topic in the revised lower secondary history curriculum supported this choice. The topic was subsequently narrowed down, and the discussions were focused on the culture of *Sabiny/Sebei*, a minority ethnic group in eastern Uganda. The participants were asked to read multiple resources about the selected societies, to analyse their content and make an interpretation to be posted on the PBwiki.

For the purposes of this study, ethnicity was viewed as a natural human desire to know about one's family history and ancestry. This closely aligns with the practice that social justice teaching and learning practices involve truly seeing students for who they are and where they come from (Kukulska-Hulme et al. 2022). That said, students may bring into the discussions their prior knowledge and lived experience of ethnicity and cultures, which arouses their interest in learning about history, while the teacher supports this content and pedagogy by providing appropriate scholarly readings and culturally oriented theories. Therefore, the selected topic combined the participants' personal interests with the aim of improving the history curricula. As described by one participant after the workshop, for him the PBwiki presented itself as an "innovation in history education".

### *Data analysis*

The analysis of the student experiences in this paper is based on qualitative one-to-one interviews with 20 (6 female and 14 male) participants, who indicated to be in their third year of study and to be conversant with using social media tools such as blogs and wikis. The interviews were conducted in English during the process of experimentation of the wikis and then fully transcribed for analysis. A thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews was guided by the ideas of social justice pedagogy discussed in previous sections.

### **Findings**

In response to our research questions, three main themes were identified based on the interviews: (1) increased educator–student and student–student interactions, (2) democratic participation and dialogue, and (3) listening to

the ethnic minority students' voices. Moreover, some sentiments were identified in alignment with those three themes, such as social justice as a means for students' appreciation of their personal lives, pedagogical relationships, and preservice teachers' future practices. In this section, we will discuss our findings under these three broad themes.

#### *Increased educator–student and student–student interactions*

During the interview sessions, participants were requested to share something interesting about their cultural heritages and ethnicities based on the principle that social justice pedagogy involves sub-cultures and allows teachers to facilitate topics on culture to increase students' interest in real-world issues (Kukulska-Hulme et al. 2022). Additionally, participants were asked to share their thoughts on the online socialization space on the PBwiki, so that they would read each other's posts and comment on them. In the interviews, 18 of the 20 participants revealed that PBwiki increased their interactions with the educator and among their peers and, hence, contributed to the change in the pedagogical relationships.

One participant stated that he felt free and closer to the educator and his peers since the PBwiki facilitated an online socialization space to share their cultures and ethnic origins. He said:

I never really thought of having got a close relationship with the educator and my fellow peers. I must confess that I am naturally shy during the physical classrooms and never say anything. But the online socialization space has enabled me to talk about my culture and ethnic origin. I felt excited when the educator and fellow students picked interest in my post and asked me questions about my culture. I would say the Wiki space has enabled me to get closer to the educator and my fellow students.

In relation to the increase in student–student interaction, another participant reported that:

Through online interactions, I got an opportunity to learn more about my own ethnic group from peers from a similar culture. This increased our relationships and bondage as brothers and sisters from the same ethnic origin.

Several participants revealed that online socialization on the PBwiki was an interesting space where they felt free to talk about their cultures. One student said: "I love my culture so much that wherever someone else talks about it, I get a sense of belonging". Since I got to know that we all share similar cultural heritages and belongings, another participant emphasized the importance of freedom of expression in online spaces since "you are not worried about the verbal communication in the official English language where you can mix up

words”. Another student commented that she received instant responses from the educator and peers when she shared posts about her culture and ethnic origins: “It becomes hard to receive instant feedback from the educator if you have questions in the physical classroom, however with the PBWiki you are assured of quick answer to all your questions”.

These students’ insights about their participation and sharing about their cultures and ethnic origins during online socialization indicated the ways in which PBwiki had changed pedagogical relationships. However, another student felt sorry for her course mates who could not access the PBwiki because they had no access to Internet-enabled devices and therefore were not able to benefit from the dialogical conversations between the educator and the students. The participant said that:

The lack of access to internet enabled devices constrained my course mates who were interested in making contributions on the PBWiki but could not afford. Unequal access to social media tools may limit student’s participation which breeds into inequalities that in most cases culminate into the digital divide.

This observation indicates that unequal access to social media tools can increase injustice for the less-privileged groups with limited resources. In a similar vein, Papendieck (2018) postulates that introducing social media tools in classrooms can lead to inequalities for the students who have no access to those tools and therefore cannot gain full participation. He further suggests that, pushing for the incorporation of new technologies in learning must be accompanied by careful deliberation of how these tools might fortify and alter learning opportunities and relationships of power in the classroom. This can also be a step towards addressing the challenges of a digital divide.

#### *Democratic participation and dialogue*

To facilitate online discussion about ethnicity in Uganda, questions were posted on the PBwiki, inviting students to both individually and collectively consider sharing some texts and images about their cultures. During the interviews, students were asked how they felt about sharing their culture and ethnic origins in the platform. All interviewed students stated that sharing artefacts online enhanced dialogue and democratic participation enabling everyone to talk about their personal and cultural heritages. One student specifically said: “I did not even know how important it was to have shared identities and a sense of belonging. It totally makes sense to have free dialogical conversations afforded by PBwikis”.

Ten students said they had never talked about such topics in an online discussion forum before. During the interviews, one participant revealed that: “These were like no other discussions I have had online. It made me think about how sharing cultures, ethnic origin encourages freedom of expression

and participation”. Another student noted: “When we first started talking about ethnic and cultural issues a few of us were saying how we had never talked about such topics online before. It was a great opening for openness and democracy”. Yet another student said: “I have never participated in sharing images and videos about my culture and ethnic origins before, let alone in an online on a Wiki platform before”.

When asked to describe their reactions to discussing these concepts via PBwiki discussion, eight participants responded that they looked forward to conversations about ethnic and cultural issues. One student said: “I loved the conversations we had in this online socialization session, especially when we were talking about my own culture. The fact that students were participating in sharing images, texts and videos made the dialogical conversations especially interesting”. Another student said: “I looked forward to hearing about other peoples’ cultures and ethnic origins”. In other words, student participation in sharing images and videos on wiki and engaging in free dialogical conversations about their cultures and ethnic origins provide meaningful understanding of democratic participation as key in the pedagogical process. As one student noted:

PBWiki affords active participation as well as taking on criticism, I aired out all my complaints about the authoritarian teaching model frequently used by the teacher because I did not use my real names to disguise identification. It is always difficult to criticize the approaches employed by the teacher in a physical classroom.

The findings showed that PBwikis enable students to voice out their complaints on pedagogical practices that they find unpleasant. In support of this, Kukulska-Hulme et al. (2022) argue that a classroom environment that is socially just is one that is critical in nature, where teachers constantly encourage students to question ineffective teaching practices and construct their own opinions and interpretations of pedagogical practices and the overall school culture.

#### *Listening to the ethnic minority students’ voices*

To facilitate online discussion about ethnicity in Uganda, questions were posted on the PBwiki to invite students both individually and collectively to attach meanings, interpret, and enable voices of the students from ethnic minority groups to be heard. During the interviews, particular students from ethnic minority groups in Uganda whose cultural practices, heritages, and values have usually been ignored, and who often were excluded from decision-making and active citizenship, were asked to air their views. One participant coming from a minority ethnic group said she feels marginalized and silenced all the time because her cultural practices are seen as barbaric. She said:

I am always silenced when I talk about my Sabinu cultural practices of Female circumcision (Female Genital Mutilation). This is a cultural

practice that has moved through generations of girls and women in the Sabinu culture. The practice has benefits of preserving girls and women for only their husbands during marriage. The world thinks it is barbaric and the practice is being halted among the youth girls today. The Wiki conversations on ethnic origins and cultures has given me chance to voice out my cultural practice of FGM which has for long been suppressed and marginalized.

Kukulka-Hulme et al. (2022) assert that thinking about pedagogy from the perspective of social justice may involve paying attention to how cultural practices, marginalized groups, or under-represented people are omitted in published learning materials and curricula. In this respect, another participant reported: “Through online socialization, I got an opportunity to tell the world about my ethnic group of the Batwa, which is marginalized in Uganda. This should help increase our presence and representation in certain public sectors”, thus explicating hope that the minority group could be recognized in the decision-making in the country.

Several students also reflected on how talking about exclusion from decision-making and active citizenship has empowered them to participate in university student leadership and politics. One student said: “Since my ethnic group has for long been marginalized, I intend to take part in active University leadership to represent my community views”. Another narrated: “We have been overtly discriminated and marginalized as the *kia* from Kasese, the Wiki conversations are really an innovation and eye opener”. Yet another student relented: “I feel sad that I come from a minority ethnic group which is not actively participating in decision making and citizenship of our country Uganda”. Insight about listening to marginalized students’ ethnic voices shared on the PBwiki brought hope concerning the future representation and participation in active citizenship and decision-making.

## **Conclusions**

The chapter asked how local-level social innovation, in this case using social media as a pedagogical tool, can potentially contribute to social justice within higher education settings and beyond. It analysed an experimental use of wiki as a pedagogical tool in a history course for preservice teachers at Makerere University, Uganda. It conceptualized the experimentation as an educational social innovation, a novel bottom-up practice, which aimed to address two issues concerning social justice in education: hierarchical teacher–student relationship and lack of spaces for voices from ethnic minorities. The analysis of the students’ experiences showed how the use of wiki in this context increased interactions not only between the educator and the students but also between students, how it fostered democratic participation between students from different ethnic backgrounds, and how it supported listening to the voices of students from ethnic minorities. Hence, it presented a novel practice that differed

from the previous experiences that revolved around hierarchical, teacher-centred education, to the effect of silencing, ignoring, and sidelining the views of some of the ethnic minorities.

We conclude that a well-designed use of wikis, and social media in general, has the potential to enhance social justice in the classroom and within course practices. In resonance with the suggestions from the previous literature, through the experimentation, the preservice teachers experienced the use of wikis as beneficial in promoting non-hierarchical pedagogical relationships (Anwaruddin 2019) and enhancing everyone's potential to participate in democratic dialogue as empowered citizens in their educational context (Soliman 2011; Wade 2009). These experiences can potentially increase commitment to promote critical awareness and engagement with social justice in the future teacher profession (Erline et al. 2008). The analysis showed, in a similar vein with Van Wingerden's (2021) recommendations, that the wiki created an active space for the students to connect with the educator and with each other, also regarding the themes relevant to their own cultures and experiences. Hence, it facilitated social justice in education in such a way that, as Wade (2009) suggests, it built dialogical relationships where differences were appreciated and, further, gave space for learners' lived experiences and concerns (Kukulka-Hulme et al. 2022).

At the same time, as Papendieck (2018) cautions, introducing new technologies into educational contexts requires a reflection on the inequities, injustices, and marginalization that they may cause to students from low-income families who cannot afford them and therefore cannot participate in the pedagogical practices. Thus, greater teacher support, as well as guidance and creation of accompanying print materials and handouts, should be used for the successful implementation of social media tools for pedagogical purposes. It also needs to be noted that only 20 out of over 100 potential students volunteered to participate in this case study, and thus, the analysis lacked the perspectives of those not included. Moreover, while the process showed promising results regarding the potential of using wikis in preservice teacher education, our possibilities to infer implications beyond the experiment are limited. The data do not allow for an analysis of participants' practices in their future teacher profession, to explore whether they will cultivate social justice, equality, participation, dialogue, and democracy both in their own classrooms and in society at large. The risk exists, in other words, that the experiment might not lead to the realization of its social justice potential. There is evidence that educational innovations might not be sustainable without specific, intentional support (Meki Kombe & Herman 2017) and, thus, can remain short term instead of becoming new institutionalized practices.

Additionally, as, for example, Sikoyo (2010) argues, in the context of Uganda, the influence of structural factors that affect pedagogical practices and the contextual constraints within schools might hinder the implementation of educational innovations. Traditional, hierarchical methods of education can be demanded by administration and parents, and a large number of

pupils in a classroom might constrain efforts to promote dialogue and participation. Lastly, while the differences and distinctions between ethnic groups in Uganda date from precolonial times, the inequalities were intensified by the colonial administration and up to today continue to play an important role in the politics of patronage.

Hence, the pathway from experimenting with social innovation in a particular educational setting to enhance social justice between ethnic groups in future classrooms and in Ugandan society at large is a continuous and complex process, which will demand considerable time, energy, and commitment from the part of future teachers. Nevertheless, social media platforms have the potential to enhance social justice if they are used to promote dialogue and democratic participation.

## References

- Achan-Okitia, P. (2015). *Equality in Treatment: Towards a Quest for the Right to Participation for the Batwa in Uganda* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria).
- Adebisi, F. I. (2016). Decolonising education in Africa: Implementing the right to education by re appropriating culture and indigeneity. *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly*, 67(4), 433–451.
- Alava, H., Bananuka, T. H., Ahimbisibwe, K. F., & Kontinen, T. (2020). Contextualizing citizenship in Uganda. In K. Holma & T. Kontinen (Eds), *Practices of Citizenship in East Africa* (pp. 57–72). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429279171>.
- Allen, J. M., & Wright, S. E., (2014). Integrating theory and practice in the pre-service teacher education practicum. *Teachers and Teaching*, 20(2), 136–151.
- Anderson, D. M., & Fisher, J., (2016). *Authoritarianism and the securitization of development in Uganda. Aid and authoritarianism in Africa: Development without democracy* (pp.67-90). Zed Books.
- Anwaruddin, S. M. (2019). Teaching language, promoting social justice: A dialogic approach to using social media. *CALICO Journal*, 36(1), 1–18.
- Banks, J. A. (2004) Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world. *The Educational Forum*, 68(4), 296–305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720408984645>.
- Bell, L. A. (2022) Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, D. J. Goodman, D. Shlasko, R. R. Briggs, & R. Pacheco (Eds), *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (pp.1–23). 4th Edition. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003005759>.
- Bettez, S. C. (2011). Building critical communities amid the uncertainty of social justice pedagogy in the graduate classroom. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 33(1), 76–106.
- Biasutti, M. (2017). A comparative analysis of forums and wikis as tools for online collaborative learning. *Computers & Education*, 111, 158–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.04.006>.
- Biasutti, M. & El-Deghaidy, H. (2012). Using Wiki in teacher education: Impact on knowledge management processes and student satisfaction. *Computers & Education*, 59(3), 861–872. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.04.009>.
- Bower, M. (2008). Affordance analysis, matching learning tasks with learning technologies. *Educational Media International*, 45(1), 3–15.



- Brown, K. M. (2004). Assessing preservice leaders' beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding issues of diversity, social justice, and equity: A review of existing measures. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 37(4), 332–342.
- Chapman, T. K. (2013). Special issue introduction. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2013.750540>.
- Davids, N., & Waghid, Y. (2016). Higher education as a pedagogical site for citizenship education. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 11(1), 34–43. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1177/1746197915626079>.
- Dirkin, K., Roberts, S., & Plevinski, J. (2017). Powerful voices: Podcasts, history, & social justice. In *Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 2179–2184). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).
- Enterline, S., Cochran-Smith, M., Ludlow, L. H., & Mitescu, E. (2008). Learning to teach for social justice: Measuring change in the beliefs of teacher candidates. *The New Educator*, 4(4), 267–290.
- Fahrenwald, C., Kolleck, N., Schröer, A., & Truschkat, I. (2021). Editorial: “Social Innovation in Education”. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, 761487. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.761487>.
- Guthrie, K. L., & McCracken, H. (2010). Teaching and learning social justice through online service-learning courses. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 11(3), 78–94.
- Howaldt, J., & Hochgerner, J. (2018). Desperately seeking: A shared understanding of social innovation. In *Atlas of Social Innovation* (pp. 18–21). Retrieved from [https://www.socialinnovationatlas.net/fileadmin/PDF/Atlas\\_of\\_Social\\_Innovation.pdf](https://www.socialinnovationatlas.net/fileadmin/PDF/Atlas_of_Social_Innovation.pdf) (15 April 2023).
- Jakes, D. (2006). Wild about wikis. *Technology and learning*, 27(1), 6.
- Joel, C., & Nel-Sanders, D. (2021). The relationship between sustainable development, social justice and social innovation. *Administration*, 29, 66–82.
- Jost, J. T., & Kay, A. C. (2010). Social justice: History, theory, and research. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 1122–1165). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Konieczny, P. (2007). Wikis and wikipedia as a teaching tool. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 4(1). <http://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v0i0.3583>
- Kukulska-Hulme, A., Bossu, C., Charitonos, K., Coughlan, T., Ferguson, R., FitzGerald, E., Gaved, M., Guitert, M., Herodotou, C., Prieto-Blázquez, J., Rienties, B., Sangrà, A., Sargent, J., Scanlon, E., & Whitelock, D. (2022). Innovating pedagogy 2022: Exploring new forms of teaching, learning and assessment, to guide educators and policy makers. Open University Innovation Report 10. Retrieved from: [https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/ou-iet/5c334004-5f87-41f9-8570-e5db7be8b9dc\\_innovating-pedagogy-2022.pdf](https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/ou-iet/5c334004-5f87-41f9-8570-e5db7be8b9dc_innovating-pedagogy-2022.pdf).
- Kumashiro, K. K., Baber, S. A., Richardson, E., Ricker-Wilson, C., & Wong, P. L. (2004). Preparing Teachers for Anti-oppressive Education: International movements. *Teaching Education*, 15(3), 257–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047621042000257199>
- Li, M. (2011). Use of wikis in second/foreign language classes: A literature review. *CALL-EJ*, 13, 17–35.
- Maloy, R. W., Poirier, M., Smith, H. K., & Edwards, S. A. (2010). ‘The making of a standard Wiki: Covering, uncovering, and discovering curriculum frameworks using a highly interactive technology. *The History Teacher*, 44(1), 67–82.

- Marx, S., & Kim, Y. (2019). Technology for equity and social justice in education: Introduction to the special issue. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 21(1), 1–4.
- Mayhew, M. J., & Fernández, S. D. (2007). Pedagogical practices that contribute to social justice outcomes. *The Review of Higher Education*, 31(1), 55–80.
- Mehra, B. (2022). Toward an impact-driven framework to operationalize social justice and implement ICT4D in the field of information. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 74(12), 1419–1436.
- Mokoena, S. (2013). Engagement with and participation in online discussion. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 12(2), 97–106.
- Monte-Sano, C., & Budano, C. (2013). Developing and Enacting pedagogical content knowledge for teaching History. *The Journal of Learning Sciences*, 22, 171–211.
- Montelongo, R., & Eaton, P. W. (2020). Online learning for social justice and inclusion: The role of technological tools in graduate student learning. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, 37(1–2), 33–45.
- Moule, P. (2007). Challenging the five-stage model for e-learning: A new approach. *Research in Learning Technology*, 15(1), 37–50. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09687760601129588>.
- O'Hara, S. P., Pitta, D. A., Pritchard, R. H., & Webb, J. M. (2016). Implementing new technologies to support social justice pedagogy. In *Social Justice Instruction* (pp. 103–114). Springer.
- Papendieck, A. (2018). Technology for equity and social justice in education: A critical issue overview. *Texas Education Review*, 6(1), 1–9. <http://doi.org/10.15781/T2891278V>.
- Plowman, T. (2007, March). Wikis as a social justice environment. In *Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 749–751). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).
- Ramirez-Montoya, M. S. (2020). Challenges for open education with educational innovation: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 7053. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12177053>.
- Reagan, E. M., & Hambacher, E. (2021). Teacher preparation for social justice: A synthesis of the literature, 1999–2019. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 108, 103520.
- Samalieva, M. (2018). Using wikis to develop writing academic skills among pre-service EFL teachers. *Science & Research*, 11(2). Retrieved from <http://www.sandtr.org/journal/0/50.pdf>.
- Sebbowa, D. (2016). Towards a pedagogical framework for construction of historicity: A case of using Wikis among pre-service teachers at Makerere University (Doctoral Thesis, University of Cape Town, South Africa).
- Sikoyo, L. (2010). Contextual challenges of implementing learner-centred pedagogy: The case of the problem-solving approach in Uganda. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 40(3), 247–263. <http://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2010.509315>.
- Soliman, M. (2011). A comparison between three different online activities in developing social justice in a teacher education program. *Internationalization and Social Justice: The Role of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 20.
- Stein, S., & Andreotti, V. D. O. (2016). Postcolonial insights for engaging difference in educational approaches to social justice and citizenship. In A. Peterson, R. Hattam, M. Zembylas, & J. Arthur (Eds), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Social Justice*. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51507-0\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51507-0_11).

- Swalwell, K. (2013). “With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility”: Privileged students’ conceptions of justice-oriented citizenship. *Democracy and Education*, 21(1), Article 5. Retrieved from <https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol21/iss1/5>.
- Takako, M. (2011). History education and identity formation: A case study of Uganda (CMC Senior Theses). Retrieved from <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc-theses/197>.
- Titeca, K. (2018). Understanding the illegal ivory trade and traders: Evidence from Uganda. *International Affairs*, 94(5), 1077–1099.
- Wade, R. (2003). Teaching Preservice Social Studies Teachers to Be Advocates for Social Change. *The Social Studies*, 94(3), 129–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00377990309600195>
- Uganda Human Rights Commission. (2009). Protection and promotion of rights of ethnic minority groups in Uganda: The case of the Benet of Kapchorwa, the Batwa of Bundibugyo and the Kuku of Yumbe districts.
- Van Wingerden, C. (2021). Designing for inclusion within the learning management system: Social justice, identities, and online design for digital spaces in higher education. *International Journal of Educational and Pedagogical Sciences*, 15(8), 684–692.