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Abstract: *The raising voices on social justice are at an increase in the Skardu district of Pakistan. The popular notion is that 'Socially Just' societies reflect teachers and educational institutions who nurture future generations. The perception and practices of teachers regarding social justice are influenced by social justice education. This qualitative phenomenological study explores the perceptions and practices of public sector teacher educators regarding teaching for social justice in Pakistan. The study was carried out in two teacher education institutions in District Skardu. Data collection was done through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Thematic analysis following an inductive approach was used. The lens used for data analysis focused on 'Teaching for social justice.' The findings of the study revealed that the participants highlighted prominent commonalities regarding diversity, such as differences in abilities, attitudes, behaviors, region, religion, gender, culture, and socioeconomic condition of students in the classrooms. It further uncovered that the teacher educators perceived the concept of social justice in terms of equality and equity, relationships and differences, role models, and well-being. They were concerned about the discrimination and marginalization faced by the prospective teachers and were committed to mitigating such issues. These findings provide potential insight both for pre-service teachers and experienced teacher educators in Skardu, Pakistan.*

Key Words: Teaching for Social Justice, Equality, Marginalization, Discrimination, Phenomenology

Introduction

The research explores the perceptions and practices of teacher educators regarding social justice working in public sector institutions. Luigi Taparelli Azeglio used the term social justice in his 'Theoretical Treatise on Natural Right Based on Fact,' published during the period 1840–1843 (Grant & Agosto, 2008). After that, in 1863, John Stuart Mill wrote Utilitarianism on social justice. The concept of social justice was propagated by John Rawls in "A Theory of Justice" in 1971 after Mill. Social justice is a debate of interest for worldwide social activists, research scholars, and teachers. "Teaching for social justice is not only a theoretical approach to educating students but a pedagogical style of providing a voice to marginalized populations that can be employed across content areas" (Samuels, 2014, p. 1). This term is extensively used in literature. As Samuels (2014) argues, "Teaching for social justice is inclusive and practical in nature and serves to promote equity and justice" (p. 192). On the other hand, it seems that many of the researchers and teachers describe social justice differently. They are not on a single page to describe its univocal conception. Some of the teachers use various instances of injustice to describe the concept of social justice; however, such descriptors of injustice are not compatible with social justice.

The absence of social justice gives rise to these descriptors of social injustice like discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, etc. Similarly, some of the studies argued that teaching social justice in education is a confused and vague concept that makes no sense (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; North et al., 2009). Therefore, a clear elaboration of social justice in teacher education was needed as to how teacher educators teach, treat, and develop relationships with students and teachers in the institutions. How do they play their role in society? The idea of social justice is researchable to have a

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clear picture of the concept to be taught in teacher education institutions. Subsequently, this demands further debate and explanation of the concept (Samuels, 2014). Therefore, in this research, I explored the meaning, characteristics, strategies, and challenges of social justice in teacher education that might answer some dimensions of the questions from the literature. "It is especially important to note that the purpose of our research was not to simply find answers to the research questions but to explore the topic in such a way that I could inform others of the practices and perceptions of social justice" (Samuels, 2014, p. 184). However, this exploratory research was to provide a practical focus for teacher educators and prospective teachers to work for social justice in their classrooms and community. These strategies, meanings, and characteristics of social justice were developed by exploring the perceptions and practices of teacher educators regarding social justice and by attempting to concretize this elusive term in the context of teacher education. Social justice demands the prevalence of equitable resource distribution and mutual respect and care among all the members of society.

Teaching for social justice demands us to accept this twofold approach as we engage learners in our classroom's day-to-day activities and simultaneously teach them toward the vision of a socially just world (Pierre-Antoine, 2009). In fact, "if we privilege either fostering social justice in the classroom or fostering social justice in the world to the exclusion of the other, we limit the power and promise of social justice education" (Pierre-Antoine, 2009).

Even recent research has continued to place great stress on the aspect of integrating social justice within teacher education. Evidence from Turk et al. (2023) brings forth the aspect of centers for equity and justice within teacher training. An article, "When Equity and Justice Are Front and Center," has it that through the information introduced by the National Center for Educational Statistics, these are deemed valuable educational procedures.

This was further explained by Thomas et al. (2019) in articulating complex issues that put faculty in a position of challenge to know and apply social justice in teaching. In the article "Being in Tension: Faculty Explorations of the Meaning of Social Justice in Teacher Education," Thomas and colleagues reflect on many of the various tensions and challenges that educators must navigate as they promote social justice within educational settings.

Turk et al. (2023), in their work "Teacher Candidate Supervision for Social Justice, perceive the contribution of supervision in the realization of social justice among candidates. That introduction brings out some great depth of understanding of how supervisory practices are to be able, in the end, to support the development of socially just educators. It supports a general learning environment.

The Elaborated work of Ribeiro-Silva et al. (2023) is an expanded form of service-learning to an advanced level of embedding sustainability and social justice within teacher education for physical education teachers. This article, "Educating Teachers for Sustainability and Social Justice: A Service-Learning Project in Physical Education Initial Teacher Education," shows the ensuing benefits of such integrative approaches to teacher education.

Seegmiller (2020) justified in his dissertation, 'Social Justice Mathematical Modeling for Teacher Preparation,' that mathematical modeling can be used to teach social justice content in the teacher preparation program curriculum. He supports the idea that social justice concepts should be placed into the curriculum of educators so that these educators can be better prepared to teach against this plague of social injustice using mathematics.

These recent studies indeed confirm that a tenet of social justice needs to underline teachers' training. For example, they represented new empirical evidence and practical frameworks through which the conception and design of more equitable and inclusive teacher education programs might be informed to address the socioeconomic socioeconomic and cultural challenges of educators and learners.

The topic of teaching social justice in teacher education institutions in Pakistan has not been widely researched, and there is limited empirical evidence available on this subject. However, some research studies and articles suggest that there is a need to incorporate social justice principles in teacher education programs in Pakistan. The most recent works on social justice in developing education systems in Pakistan are very relevant to the exact idea of implementing principles of social justice in the country's educational



policies. These investigations represent empirical proof of the situation and give some recommendations for a more socially just educational environment.

The study by Bin Dost and Mahmood (2021), "Teaching for Social Justice in Pakistani Teacher Education: A Critical Review of Literature," unveils how shallow and perfunctory the infusion of the ideals of social justice in the curriculum is at present. They bring that more critical pedagogy in which considerations will be put on reflection and action to more effectively discard teachers who would be skillful in handling social justice issues in their classrooms.

Ghaffar and Khan (2018) used the case in "Teaching Social Justice in Pakistani Teacher Education - A Case Study." This study concerns preservice teachers' awareness raising and commitment after a curriculum on social justice. It was found out that such an embedding of social justice within teacher education entails considering strengthening the capacity of the teachers to address and promote equity in and through their professional practices.

The current article, "Teaching Social Justice in Teacher Education: The Case of Pakistan," finds Raza (2016) making a passionate argument that social justice pedagogy is necessary both in and across teacher education programs. The study supports the infusion of critical pedagogy and cultural responsiveness in the curriculum and praxis of preparation to work with today's and tomorrow's teachers in these changing contexts.

From a general perspective, Abdullah and Chaudhry (2018) adopted a comprehensive outlook in their article "Promoting Social Justice and Equity through University Education in Pakistan." This study emphasized social justice and equity in higher education universities, signifying that such universities, too, do boast of taking part in promoting these same values. In contrast, the authors introduced systematic policy reformation, including curriculums developing strategies to close the existing gaps and the challenges of an education system.

It is in this study Khan et al. (2015) noted how diverse education in the region was now being channeled toward "Ensuring a harmonized and pluralistic society in Gilgit-Baltistan" amidst the differences that cut across sects and cultures. These studies, hence, collectively underline an urgency for comprehensive educational reforms in Pakistan, including concerns for social justice principles in insights and practical recommendations to policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers toward the realization of a more inclusive and fairer education system.

Rationale of the Study

The substance of this study was based on our longstanding interest in the challenges of teaching social justice. Over the last fifteen years, we have been either working as a teacher, head teacher, or teacher educator. We faced various challenges specific to social justice dealing with students, parents, community, teachers, prospective teachers, and other people from society in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Social justice in a diverse society is more worthy in the contemporary world. A study conducted by Khan et al. (2015) in the context of Gilgit Baltistan to ensure a harmonized and pluralistic society describes the nature of diversity in the area as follows:

"Fourteen language communities — such as *Shina, Balti, Burushaski, Khowar, Wakhi, Domaaki, Gujri, Uyghur, Kirghiz, Keloch, Kashmiri, Hindkoh, Pushto, Punjabi* — live side by side with each other in different valleys and in the administrative headquarters of the fourteen districts. The majority of the inhabitants are Muslims belonging to four main communities of interpretation: *Sunni, Shia, Ismaili, and Noorbakhshi*." (p.43)

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have a long history of peace and harmony. However, in the last few decades, the overall climate of the society has changed due to various factors that are a direct threat to ensuring social justice in Gilgit-Baltistan. Various research studies report factors like sectarianism, political identity, gender discrimination, curricular effects, and cultural disintegration in Gilgit-Baltistan. "Sectarian unrest has been one of the top issues in Gilgit-Baltistan in the last few decades. Historical analysis shows that Islam came to this region in the thirteenth century, and all the sects lived in peace and harmony" (Khan et al., 2015). Similarly, Shafa (2011) describes, "Extreme poverty, unemployment,

illiteracy, and the presence of foreign agitators who wanted to create disruption and chaos in Gilgit-Baltistan fueled the sectarian conflicts."

According to Khan et al. (2015), "Over the passage of time, many precious lives have been lost in the region, which is a great human loss and hurdle in the creation of harmony in society." Multiple factors create a gap in ensuring law and order in Gilgit-Baltistan. There is a huge challenge for the teachers, head teachers, educationists, and teacher educators to teach with peace and tolerance after the inception of 1988 tensions in Gilgit-Baltistan. These tensions were induced by foreign agitators, and ultimately, the pluralistic and peaceful environment of institutional culture deliberately shifted to tribal and religious sectarianism. Since then, ethnic, regional, local, nonlocal tribal, and religious stereotyping have been inherited in the social and educational institutions of Gilgit-Baltistan (Shafa, 2011). According to Mosel & Jackson (2013), "The most recent wave of violence surfaced in the region on 28th February 2012, when masked extremists killed 16 passengers on four buses in the Hurban area of Kohistan. Since then, the law-and-order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan has worsened". Many of the killed passengers were the residents of Skardu District. King Martin Luther had once rightly said, "Injustice anywhere is the direct threat to justice everywhere."

The layer of injustice further increases when native people feel political instability and marginalization from the mainstream. Khan et al. (2015) reported that this was taken as an identity crisis and denial of basic human rights by the International Crisis Group; the study explains, "Since the Northern Areas have no representation in any federal constitutional or political forum, stakeholders cannot articulate demands or grievances to a wider audience. As a result, these grievances tend to result in unrest in the region" (p.45). Some reports, on the other hand, explore that the reason behind the injustice and unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan is their cultural disintegration. For instance, a study conducted by Dad (2016) with the findings of cultural disintegration in Gilgit Baltistan. Some of the researchers, on the other hand, Nayyar and Salim (2003) and Muhammad (2014), look at the issue in Gilgit-Baltistan from a lens of curriculum perspective. In their opinion, the curricula of Pakistan in general and GB in particular lack elements for creating an inclusive and peaceful society.

Similarly, Khan et al. (2015) suggest educational reforms both in curriculum development and teaching for social justice with an educative strategy to ensure an inclusive, multiethnic society in Gilgit Baltistan. According to Pakistan Vision 2025, "Our vision of development is based on inclusiveness and social justice" (Khan et al., 2015, p.48). Therefore, it was significant to carry out a study in the context of the Gilgit-Baltistan territory of Pakistan. This study was conducted in District Skardu, which is the division headquarters of all five districts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Purpose Statement

Social justice plays a key role in society. However, it is observed that certain issues obstruct social justice. Being a teacher, I realized that a superficial understanding of this phenomenon is not enough to ensure justice, so there is a dire need to have a deep comprehension of the problem. Pierre-Antoine (2009) describes that injustice is deeply rooted in both individual actions and societal institutions where privilege creates discrimination among people both inside the classrooms and overall in society. Therefore, it is a challenging task for teacher educators to maintain a balance between focusing on creating a socially just classroom and working for a just society. She further highlights that if teacher educators focus only on creating a socially just classroom, they may neglect to teach students the skills and strategies for creating a socially just world. On the other hand, if they direct their attention solely on developing a socially just society beyond the classroom, they will be at risk of indoctrinating the prospective teachers toward certain political perspectives and ignoring the essential elements of what students can learn for social justice through their daily interactions in the classroom community.

The existing literature contains extensive perceptions of schoolteachers' social, political, and religious activists advocating social justice, yet little focus is given to the perceptions of teacher educators on the meaning and practicum of social justice at teacher education institutions in Pakistan. Only a few studies specifically explore the existing social injustice and inequity in university education (Abdullah & Chaudhry, 2018). The purpose of the study, therefore, was to investigate how teacher educators perceive social justice and how they practice it in their classrooms. This study of teacher educators who practice social justice



can provide insights to better understand the reason for social justice, the nature of social justice, and how it was to reduce the gaps between social justice theory and practice through education. Abdullah and Chaudhry (2018) describe that "unfortunately, despite the government's interest, no considerable research has been done in the Pakistani context specifically to ensure social justice and equity through education" (p. 2). The literature review revealed the scarcity of research conducted on social justice. Thus, there is a gap in meaning, characteristics, and pragmatic strategies for teaching social justice in teacher education in Pakistan.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study:

1. How do teacher educators perceive teaching for social justice?
2. What do teacher educators practice teaching for social justice in the classrooms?
3. How do teacher educators perceive diversity in their classes when teaching for social justice?
4. How do teacher educators perceive their role in social justice?
5. How do teacher educators create a socially just classroom community?

Methodology

A qualitative interpretive phenomenological research approach, also called hermeneutic phenomenology, was used. The term hermeneutic is derived from a Greek word "hermeneuein" which means to "translate" or "interpret". Furthermore, in Greek mythology, it was associated with the Greek God Hermes, whose job was to interpret and communicate messages from Zeus and the other Gods to ordinary mortals (Farrell, 2020). In hermeneutics phenomenology, interpreters must explicate the "fore structures" of their understanding. Furthermore, this research approach focuses on the meaning of being in the world (Farrell, 2020). It is impossible to segregate the researchers' ego "We" from reality and the process of meaning-making because the interpreter is part of reality (Farrell, 2020). The reality in hermeneutic phenomenology is neither singular nor something 'out there,' but rather there are multiple realities that are local and specifically constructed (Laverly, 2003). Phenomenology is all about understanding the lived experiences of others. It is a philosophy as well as an approach to research (Farrell, 2020). In this research study, the phenomenon was the concept of social justice, which we seek to clarify in terms of teacher educators' perceptions and practices.

Context and Participants of the Study

This study was carried out in two teacher education institutions in District Skardu. One of the colleges of education and the university department of education were the research sites which had almost all representatives of ethnic groups both in the form of teacher educators and prospective teachers who were engaged in ADE, B. Ed (Hon), and M.A education programs. Teacher educators were the research participants from these educational institutions. We used the following criteria to select the research participants.

1. We used participants' selection criteria to recruit appropriate research participants.
2. To start the process of recruitment, we shared participants' selection criteria with the research participants via cell phone.
3. In addition, we contacted them by visiting their institutions.
4. The pools of teacher educators to be contacted were ten in number; out of them five teacher educators were from a university department of education and the rest of the five were from one of the colleges of education.
5. We communicated the purpose of the study along with the Selection Criteria to the research participants in the Consent Form and in the Information Sheet. We recruited five teacher educators who fulfilled the research criteria.
6. Recruitment unfolded until a sample size $n=5$ had been reached; recruitment would have been resumed later if more data had been needed for saturation (Frechette et al., 2020).

Table 1

Demographic and Professional Information of Teacher Educators

Participant	Qualification/s	Years of Teaching	Subject/s taught/ Being taught
Zahid	M.Ed. M.A. English	17	English, Pedagogy, Science, ICT, School Management
Maryam	M.Sc. Pakistan Studies	15	Pakistan Studies, Social Studies, Research Methods, Gender Education, Educational Policy and Planning, Teacher Education, Curriculum, Contemporary Trends and Issues in Education.
Khalid	PhD Teacher Education	30	Science, Chemistry, Assessment, Teaching Practicum.
Nabi	M.Ed., M.Sc. Chemistry	12	Educational Philosophy, Curriculum, Test Measurement and Assessment.
Waqar	M.A. Education	21	

Data Collection

The first data-collecting tool was a semi-structured interview- which was conducted in two phases, namely, the initial interview and a follow-up interview. Using the interview guide, we interviewed teacher educators one by one on a ruling basis twice in the study. During the interview sessions, we also used probes. We recorded participants' voices in a voice recorder after getting their consent. After successfully completing the first interview session, we managed a meeting with the teacher educators to be observed in their classrooms. We observed the research participants for a full period of one hour, and we observed two periods for each participant. During observation and interview sessions, field notes were generated side by side, along with reflexivity. We also used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as a data-collecting tool in the study to ensure triangulation. Focus Group Discussion was used after conducting the first interview but before a follow-up interview. We informed all prospective teachers on how to respond, how to listen, and how to criticize someone's idea. We conducted four FGDs during which we engaged the prospective teachers for an hour in each discussion.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the gathered data by an inductive method in five steps (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glesne, 2012). In the first step, we transcribed the data by repeatedly listening to the interview recordings. While using the hermeneutic circle, the data was read several times for better understanding. After that, we set the lens of "teaching for social justice" for data analysis. We analyzed the data line by line to identify initial patterns. In the third step, we coded the data using thematic codes to better capture the meaning of the transcribed text. In the fourth step, we categorized generated codes to create specific and general themes. Lastly, we synthesized categorized codes to yield primary themes. In reporting, we took direct quotations from all the data sources by using participants' pseudonyms.

Authenticity and Credibility of the Instruments

We validated all the research tools by soliciting expert opinions (Forman et al., 2008; Glesne, 2012). Six PhDs validated the research tools. Initially, there were 36 items in the interview guide (initial and follow-up), 08 items in observation, and seven items in FGDs. Two items were declared irrelevant, so we removed them from the interview guide. Similarly, only one item was identified as irrelevant in observation; we removed that from the observation tool, while none of the items was identified as irrelevant in FGDs. In addition to this, we used multiple sources to ensure triangulation. The triangulation of data-collecting sources ensures the authenticity and credibility of the gathered data (Anney, 2014).



Findings

During the detailed analysis of the data, the following eight themes consistently emerged and gave meaning to the study findings.

Facilitating Social Justice by Creating a Conducive Learning Environment

This finding explored that teacher educators practice social justice by creating a conducive learning environment based on diversity and good relationships among teachers and students and students to students. The second theme from the analysis of the data serves as evidence to support this finding. Theme 2, 'Differences and relationship,' highlighted participants' perceptions of diversity. This theme examined the significance of understanding differences and building good relationships with others, as there is diversity in language, age, gender, abilities, region, and religion in the classrooms and in society. Theme six, 'Well-being,' also explored the idea that teacher educators value respect, equity, equality, peace, tolerance, acceptance, and pluralism in their classrooms. This finding also explored how teacher educators managed to facilitate social justice by providing equal opportunities to students' voices, such as raising questions, criticizing another point of view, etc. Theme seven, "Freedom to students' voices," examined the practices of teacher educators for student-centered learning by giving them choices to reflect on and providing feedback for better learning.

Similarly, the finding is also supported by the last theme of the study as evidence. Theme 8, 'Facilitating students for learning,' examined practices of teacher educators for creating a socially just classroom environment to facilitate social justice. The way they provide learning opportunities for their students includes understanding students' background, gender, region, religion, aptitude, likes, dislike, abilities, and socio-economic conditions; setting the classroom norms and ground rules for all; developing a conducive learning environment; listening to students; give equal learning opportunities and dealing students based on their individual needs.

Employing Pedagogical Methods to Teach for Social Justice

The finding related to employing pedagogical methods to teach social justice in teacher education institutions reported that teacher educators used various pedagogies while teaching social justice in the classrooms. For instance, they used discussion methods, small-scale group activities, group presentations, field-based exposure visits, conduct seminars, and reflective sessions. Theme five, 'Student engagement,' supports this finding as evidence. This theme explains the manner in which teacher educators facilitated learning for prospective teachers in the classrooms and in the institution, teaching with social justice—highlighted discussion methods, sharing life experiences, organizing reflective sessions, small-scale group activities, and co-curricular activities.

Teacher Educators' Personal Connections with Marginalized Students

This finding showed teacher educators' personal connections to marginalized students in their institutions. All research participants showed their personal interest and concern for various kinds of injustice in the country in general and in the teacher education institutions in particular. The first theme, "Equity and equality," supports this finding, as evidenced by the data. This theme emerging from data analysis explains participants' perceptions about teaching for social justice that equity and equality play a key role in facilitating teaching for social justice and teaching with social justice. This theme explored the conception of social justice by explaining terms like marginalized and privileged segments of society and discussing how to cope with this discrimination within the class and in society.

Teachers Serve as a Role Model and Facilitator in Teaching for Social Justice

Another finding of the study suggested that teachers and teacher educators are role models for the students and the community because they serve as change agents and community educators. In addition, to ensure social justice both in the teacher education institutions and in society, they primarily need to lead by example and work to minimize challenges on the way to social justice as change agents. This finding is supported by theme three, "Role model" of the study. Theme 3 highlights that teachers and teacher educators are role models not only for the classrooms but also for the community as well. They are change

agents and facilitators for learning and social justice within the classroom settings and in society as educators.

Influential Role of Family, Social Structure, and Self-Interest

This finding revealed research participants' deep connection with their family and community stereotyping and their own self-interest in making decisions and choosing the teaching profession. The family background of the research participants was not the focus of this study; however, in the conversations during interviews, they frequently referenced the role of their family. During the interview session, the research participants frequently referred to the role of their families, parents, social structure, and their own personal interests. In their opinion, these variables not only influenced their decision to choose but also deeply influenced their views regarding social justice. This finding is supported by the individual narratives of the research participants, as the role of family priorities, socioeconomic conditions, and social structure was consistently highlighted by all the research participants.

Influential Role of Educational Institutions

The finding explored the research participants' connection with educational institutions where they studied throughout their academic careers. During the interview, the participants also highlighted the role of school education. According to them, educational institutions not only influenced their decision to choose but also deeply influenced the shaping of their views regarding social justice. They even mentioned the significance of NGOs in their grooming and development. This finding is also supported by the individuals' narratives. They were highly influenced by their schools of education, where they studied throughout their academic career. All the research participants repeatedly highlighted the role of teachers in educational institutions.

Conflicts and Barriers to Teaching for Social Justice

The finding highlighted some of the conflicting situations between teachers and students, students and students in the classrooms. Teachers and students referred to different instances of injustice within their classrooms and in the institutions. It also highlighted some of the obstacles faced during teaching for social justice. These challenges include the lack of relevant knowledge, skills, and disposition of the teachers, the shallow curriculum in the country, the shyness of the students in the classrooms, their communication level, the focus on covering the syllabus to prepare students for standardized tests, and environmental pollution. This finding is supported by theme four, which examines the obstacles to teaching social justice and facilitating a socially just classroom community for teachers and teacher educators.

Discussion

The multiple data collection sources gave meaning to the themes and findings of the study. They were used to interpret the participants' perceptions and practices of social justice.

The first research question explored the perceptions of teacher educators regarding teaching for social justice. The overarching finding is teacher educators' personal connections to marginalized students. Equity and equality play a key role in facilitating teaching for social justice. This study also explored the concept of social justice by explaining terms like marginalized and privileged segments of society; it also discussed how to cope with discrimination within the class and in society. This finding of the study is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Lee, 2011; Bursa & Ersoy, 2016; Pierre-Antoine, 2009; Abdullah & Chaudhry, 2018). The assumption that was made from the literature review in the initial stages of planning for our study is that social justice is concerned with the equal distribution of resources. The study affirms that assumption. The findings of this study suggest that equity and equality are the overarching concepts of social justice. If we fail to exercise equality and equity, we will be victims of injustice like marginalization, discrimination, gender biases, etc.

The second research question examined teacher educators' practices to teach for social justice in the classrooms. The study found that teacher educators are central to facilitating and engaging prospective teachers not only in classrooms but outside classrooms as well. Theme five, "Students Engagement," examined the importance of a pedagogical approach in engaging and facilitating students both within the



classrooms and outside. Cimillo (2011) found "Facilitating discussions and dialogues in classrooms that promote thinking and questioning." Samuels (2014) found that the teaching for social justice "approach involves using discussion, films or documentaries, journaling, sensory learning, current events, technology, poems, songs, or novels, teaching for social justice appeals to the learner and makes learning relevant" (p. 181).

However, the findings contrast with the findings of the study conducted by Cochran-Smith et al. (2009). According to their study, teaching social justice is a vague term that makes no sense in practical teaching. Our research findings clearly illustrate the concept of teaching for social justice in teacher education. All our research participants evidenced their practices of teaching social justice in the classrooms. The practical nature of teaching for social justice for our research participants was that they used it as a pedagogical approach to teaching in teacher education institutions. The finding suggests that teachers use discussion, small-scale group activities, individual assignments, sharing life experiences, reflective sessions, and co-curricular activities as pedagogical strategies and techniques for "teaching for social justice." One of the possible reasons for contrasting our findings with the study may be that they have conducted their studies on student teachers. They concluded that student teachers focus more on students' learning rather than on inculcating their self-esteem and political ideologies. However, our study has been conducted to explore teacher educators' perceptions and practices of social justice. Thus, the context is changed from school education classrooms to higher education classrooms. Secondly, the research participants in both studies were different, from prospective teachers to teacher educators.

The study also explored "Well-being" related to teacher educators' practices of teaching social justice in the classrooms. All research participants consistently emphasized values to teach for social justice, such as respect, equity, equality, peace, tolerance, acceptance, pluralism, and preaching the truth. Data from focus group discussions and classroom observation also revealed that teacher educators were engaged in teaching and practicing these values, which are consistent with the results and findings of studies from our literature review (Samuels, 2014; Pierre-Antoine, 2009; Bursa & Ersoy, 2016; Cimillo, 2011). The findings suggest that well-being is also an integral component of teaching social justice. So, a classroom practicing well-being in its daily routines can be a socially just classroom.

Another finding of this study suggests "Freedom to students' voices." Practices of teacher educators for student-centered learning by giving them choices to reflect and providing feedback for better learning. This finding is also consistent with the three previous studies conducted by (Pierre-Antoine, 2009; Cimillo, 2011; Mamikonyan, 2017). Cimillo (2011) found that all voices are included in the classrooms. Mamikonyan (2017) concludes that teaching for social justice recognizes inequality and promotes academic success by providing pedagogical equity, giving voice to students, and building a classroom community with a strong relationship between participants. Pierre-Antoine (2009) stated, "Student voice is a central component of social justice education, and the arts provide additional opportunities for self-expression" (p.73). This finding suggests that freedom of students' voices in the classrooms and in the institutions enhances their learning, confidence level, interest, and critical and reflective thinking.

The third research question examined the perceptions of teacher educators regarding diversity in their classrooms to teach for social justice. The finding of this study revealed that research participants highlighted prominent commonalities regarding diversity, such as differences in abilities, attitudes, behaviors, religion, gender, culture, and socioeconomic condition of students in the classrooms. This finding of the study is consistent with the result found in the previous study. According to Pierre-Antoine (2009), "Social justice education is concerned with a conscious and consistent focus on including the history and perspectives of all people, including those with different ethnicities, physical abilities, religious beliefs, genders, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic situations" (p.12). Cimillo (2011) found teachers have "Cultural knowledge and awareness." Similarly, according to Cimillo, "the teachers' understanding of the needs, perceptions, ethnic, and cultural diversity of their students, as well as the optimum learning environment for all students, influenced teachers' methodologies and teaching approaches in their multicultural diverse classrooms." Cimillo further sheds light on the significance of diversity, "It is important to reflect on the idea that "Equal is not the same," meaning that treating every student in the same way will not necessarily result in equality. In fact, it may perpetuate inequalities by denying the

differences that exist among students" (p. 9). Similarly, understanding multicultural group dynamics is another factor that must be considered when teaching social justice (Welton et al., 2015).

Besides, the differences between all research participants emphasized the development of relationships based on respect and tolerance with people who are entirely different from them. This finding is also consistent with the results of previous studies. Cimillo (2011) found, "Diversity requires plurality and acceptance of cultural and individual diversity in the classroom." Similarly, Pierre-Antoine (2009) focuses on "living and working with others who hold differing values and needs in the teacher educators' classrooms to promote teaching for social justice" (p.7). Similarly, a more recent argument asserts that social justice should be about how we relate to and treat each other, both in face-to-face interactions and in macro social and economic relations (Young, 1990). Therefore, Shield & Mohan (2004), suggests that teaching educators for social justice must encourage the development of relationships and facilitate dialogue about differences.

One of the assumptions during the initial stages of our research was that besides equal distribution of resources, social justice consists of the relationship of people with care, peace, respect, and tolerance. Findings from the perceptions and practice of teacher educators, the study affirms this assumption, and the findings suggest that people are different with respect to age, sex, gender, culture, religion, aptitude, and individual differences. So, developing relationships among people having differences entails coexisting with differences. This gives meaning to teachers and teachers educators that a classroom is an artificial setting of teaching and learning where students and teachers, teachers and teachers, and students and students interact. The development of good relationships is an integral part of social justice in the teacher education institutions in general and in the classrooms in particular.

The fourth research question that guided this study examined the role of teachers in connection to social justice as facilitators, change agents, community educators, fair and transparent, and promoters of social justice by inculcating values in students and society as role models. This finding is consistent with results reported by the previous studies (Cimillo, 2011; Pierre-Antoine, 2009; Robertson, 2008; Morley, 2006; Mamikonyan, 2017). This finding of the study suggests that the role of teacher educator is primary to social justice as teachers play a key role in classrooms and community as role models. The data in this study also explored the fact that teachers' perceptions and experiences are shaped by the influence of their family background and the educational institutions in society (Samuels, 2014; Murtaza, 2012). The findings from the study suggest that teachers and teacher educators are role models for students and society. They are change agents, social activists, facilitators for teaching and learning inside classrooms, and community educators to raise awareness in society.

However, it is apparent from the findings that some of the teacher educators have limited knowledge and skills regarding teaching for social justice. For instance, Zahid confessed that he was not able to understand students' individual differences, and according to him, concepts of social justice like equity, equality, and diversity were a challenge for him. Similarly, Waqar connected students' living styles, facial expressions, and dresses to the concept of well-being, which shows his poor understanding of social justice. Likewise, Maryam, Nabi, and Waqar described gender roles according to the prevalent stereotyping constructed by the dominant society. Thus, teachers' perceptions are formed by their families, the schools in which they studied, and the society in which they live. This shows their limited knowledge towards teaching for social justice in teacher education. Therefore, the findings suggest refresher training programs for teacher educators and rethinking the curriculum for teacher education programs focusing on teaching for social justice framework.

Another finding explored from the data was challenges to social justice and the role of teacher educators in coping with these issues. This finding highlighted some barriers to social justice, such as limited knowledge, skills, and disposition of the teacher educators, shallow curriculum in the country, cultural differences, and shyness of the students in the class, their communication level, and covering lengthy syllabus to prepare students for standardized tests, lack of resources, lack of higher educational opportunities, politics, migration, and environmental pollution, etc. Some of the dimensions of this finding are consistent with assertions of previous studies (Lee, 2011; Bursa & Ersoy, 2016; Pierre-Antoine, 2009; Abdullah & Chaudhry, 2018).



However, environmental pollution, the shyness of students in the classrooms, and the communication level of students are the new findings of this study, as none of the above-mentioned previous studies found these findings as barriers to social justice. Secondly, all the research participants highlighted obstacles on the way to social justice and recommended certain long-term solutions to these problems. However, they practiced limited remedies to address barriers to social justice due to the lack of resources and space provided in the classrooms. For instance, during classroom observation, we observed that there were a huge number of students in each class in both teacher education institutions as compared to the classroom space available for them. Secondly, students felt shy to take part in the focus group discussion. This means that student's confidence level and their communication skills are barriers to "teaching for social justice." The finding, therefore, suggests foundational content courses in social justice education and activities for the students to mitigate their issues regarding confidence and communication skills.

The fifth research question examined the practices of teacher educators for how they create a socially just classroom community. The finding of this study explored that the manner in which teacher educators provide learning opportunities for their students included understanding students' background, gender, region, religion, aptitude, likes, dislikes, abilities, and socioeconomic conditions; setting the classroom norms and ground rules for all; developing a conducive learning environment; listening to students; give equal learning opportunities and dealing students based on their individual needs promote a culture of respect, acceptance, etc. This finding is consistent with the studies conducted by (Robertson, 2008; Pierre-Antoine, 2009; Carlisle et al., 2006; Cimillo, 2011). Based on the qualitative case study, Robertson (2008) found that a socially-just climate was created that allowed students to freely question, discuss, and make personal connections, encouraged student voice, and incorporated student choice. Similarly, Pierre-Antoine (2009) describes that the bedrock of a socially just classroom is a climate of safety and trust in which each individual's unique strengths and needs are valued. The finding suggests that before the start of teaching, a teacher should develop a climate that serves to facilitate learning and diversity and promote a culture of peace, respect, and tolerance with a sense of inclusiveness.

The article by Turk et al. (2023) explains that the Centers for Equity and Justice are critical facilities established in teacher education programs, playing a fundamental role in providing socially just educational practices, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. These findings align with the present research, emphasizing the creation of learning environments that acknowledge differences and uphold fairness and equity, positioning teacher educators in Skardu as de facto sites of equity and justice through their pedagogical and classroom practices. In another study, Turk and his colleagues (2023) describe the deeper understanding required for supervisory practices that support socially just educator development, which is reflected in the current study's emphasis on active pedagogy through reflective practices, discussions, and experiential learning. These methods foster critical thinking and social awareness, which are essential for developing educators capable of implementing social justice principles in their teaching.

Thomas et al. (2019) discuss that faculty face complexities and tensions in interpreting and applying social justice principles in practice, which resonates with the current study's findings. Teacher educators in Skardu navigate significant challenges, including superficial curricula, societal and institutional politics, and limited resources. Both studies highlight the need for teacher educators to find strategies to effectively negotiate these challenges while promoting social justice.

Ribeiro-Silva et al. (2023) added another layer to service learning by including sustainability and social justice in physical education teacher training. This aligns with the present research, showing how teacher educators in Skardu use diverse and inclusive pedagogies to address social injustices. Both studies demonstrate the impact of integrating social justice principles into various aspects of teacher education beyond academic content. Seegmiller (2020) advocates for infusing social justice concepts into mathematical modeling during teacher preparation programs, arguing for an interdisciplinary approach to combating social injustice. The findings suggest that social justice education should engage all future educators, addressing and integrating these principles across subjects, teaching practices, and pedagogical approaches.

The findings of this study provide a rich background for understanding how social justice can be more effectively integrated into teacher education. By identifying several thematic parallels and insights from other researchers, it affirms the significant global commitment to embedding social justice in educational frameworks.

In the Pakistani context, Bin Dost and Mahmood (2021) critically reviewed the superficial integration of social justice ideals within the curriculum, advocating for a deeper, reflective pedagogy. The current study supports this view, revealing that while teacher educators in Skardu are committed to social justice, they face systemic challenges that require deeper curricular reforms and better professional development opportunities. Ghaffar and Khan (2018) emphasize the importance of creating supportive and inclusive learning environments to foster critical thinking and dialogue about social justice issues. The current study supports this by demonstrating how teacher educators in Skardu engage prospective teachers in reflective practices and discussions, creating an inclusive classroom climate that respects and values diversity.

Raza (2016) argues for integrating social justice pedagogy across teacher education programs to prepare teachers for diverse and evolving classroom contexts. The findings align with this perspective, highlighting the need for continuous professional development and the incorporation of social justice principles into teacher education curricula to better equip educators for addressing socio-economic and cultural challenges. Abdullah and Chaudhry (2018) discuss the role of higher education institutions in promoting social justice and equity, suggesting systematic policy reforms and curriculum development strategies. Similarly, this study calls for comprehensive educational reforms in Pakistan, including curriculum restructuring and policy changes, to support the effective integration of social justice in teacher education.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable empirical evidence on the perceptions and practices of teacher educators regarding social justice in Skardu. It aligns with and reinforces the findings of other researchers, underscoring the global relevance and urgency of embedding social justice in teacher education. It advocates for reflective, inclusive, and equity-focused pedagogical practices that address the diverse needs of learners and contribute to a more just and equitable society.

Implications

The implications of the study are based on the findings, limitations, and our interpretation of the findings as researchers. This qualitative phenomenological study contributes to the field of teacher education by providing insight into teaching for social justice from the practices and perceptions of five teacher educators in public sector institutions in Pakistan. Detail descriptions developed in the study are an addition to the body of literature in the field of teacher education, particularly in theory and practice, to explain social justice. The description and interpretation of the data in the study essentially portray what the nature of social justice looks like in the field of teacher education in the district of Skardu, Pakistan. The findings of this study provide potential insight both for pre-service teachers and experienced teacher educators in education. The findings may serve as a potential use for the pre-service teacher preparation programs and for the training of trainers in relation to education in general and teacher education in particular. Detail descriptions regarding barriers faced by the research participants for social justice may also serve to inform curriculum developers, policymakers, teacher trainers, administrators, and classroom teachers about developing inclusive and comprehensive strategies. The findings and limitations of the study may serve as an alternative insight for future researchers to conduct research studies in the field of education, particularly teacher education in other developing countries like Pakistan.

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