

Prospective-teachers as Instructional and/or Pedagogical Leaders: A Gender Perspective Lens

Abstract

This paper explores the perceptions of teacher-educators about prospective-teachers⁴ as instructional and/or pedagogical leaders. Using a case study approach to research within the qualitative paradigm, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. The findings of this study revealed that teacher-educators, having a conventional approach to teaching, perceive prospective-teachers as instructional leaders. It is recommended that teacher-educators need to reflect on their own beliefs, perceptions, and roles, which altogether contribute to shaping prospective-teachers as pedagogical leaders.

Keywords: *Teacher as Instructional Leader, Teacher as Pedagogical Leaders, Teacher-educators' Orientation, Prospective Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the views of *teacher-educators*⁵ within the 'socio-pedagogical' context of teaching and learning while preparing prospective-teachers (Author, 2016). In Pakistan, these teacher education institutions (i.e., the college of education and universities which offer teacher education to prepare future teachers) offer a diverse range of teacher education degree programs for prospective-teachers. Thus, it is the teacher-educators who orient, expose and lead these prospective-teachers as pedagogical or instructional leaders depending upon their own particular orientation towards teaching. The educators in Pakistan, in these teacher preparing institutions, have a diverse range of orientations towards their own pedagogical outlook embedded within a particular philosophical view of education, which ultimately

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⁴ The student teachers who are enrolled in colleges of education and/or universities where teacher preparation courses are taught. These prospective-teachers are also known as future teachers and students teachers. Therefore, these terms will be used in this paper alternatively.

⁵ Lecturers, assistant professors and senior instructors of college of education and university where teacher education degree programs are offered in Pakistan especially in Gilgit-Baltistan.

define their approaches to teaching. Thus, these educators with their own set of beliefs, perceptions, and orientations to a particular teaching philosophy lead them to guide their students as prospective-teachers in order to prepare them as instructional and/or pedagogical leaders for future schools, colleges and universities.

The purpose of this paper is to explore why these teacher-educators perceive prospective-teachers as instructional and/or pedagogical leaders, and in what ways a gender perspective plays a significant role (Oyserman & Fisher, 2017) as future teachers. We also need to explore whether it makes any sense to ‘consider the essentialized idea that boys are brilliant, while girls are hard workers’ (Oyserman, 2019, p. 17) while using a gender lens to evaluate the performance of both male and female prospective-teachers. The paper also delineates how teacher-educators engage prospective teachers in teacher education degree programs while practicing within their own philosophical orientations as instructional or pedagogical leaders (Author, 2016). To understand the orientation of teacher educators, in these Pakistani educational institutions, we need to know their perceptions and beliefs towards a *technical interest of education* (Habermas, 1972). Because a technical interest of education focuses only to transfer their knowledge using an instructional approach to teaching whereas educators who believe in a student-centered approach to teaching (Ahmed, 2013; Author & Poudel, 2014) apply a pedagogical approach. Male and Palaiogou (2012) argued that teachers as pedagogical leaders demonstrate how to ensure ‘knowledge creation and management ahead of knowledge transmission’ (p.107). Thus, teachers as pedagogical leaders have a different orientation to teaching, and they have a clear focus on how to create opportunities for learners in the classroom, which enable them to be more creative and innovative learners. On the other hand, teachers as instructional leaders appear to focus on how to transmit knowledge in the minds of learners in particular cultural settings (Freire, 1993).

Thus, this paper enunciates how pedagogical or instructional approaches of teacher-educators shape the education system in Pakistan, and provide an opportunity to learn about the pedagogical or instructional role of teachers and teacher-educators in their respective domains. It also highlights the challenges of developing and implementing such pedagogies in the context of Pakistan. The article concludes with a discussion on the implication of teaching approaches and recommendations for policy and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a formal educational setting in Pakistan, the beliefs, practices, and orientations of teacher-educators guided by a particular philosophy of teaching influence prospective-teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has always been questioned at different levels, including both in public and private schools (Tajik, 2012). For instance, if we look at the quality of teaching and learning in terms of how students read and write, the quality seems very low. Many studies revealed that only

42% children in Grade 5 could read a sentence of Grade 2 level in English, while girls are reported to be better than boys in both reading and writing (Alif Ailaan, 2018; ASER, 2014) whereas the essentialist philosophy believes that boys having some brilliant ideas perform better than girls (Osyerman, 2019). Thus, in this paper, the perceptions of teacher-educators were explored with reference to these philosophical views while addressing how a gender lens makes sense in teacher education programs. The paper also discusses the (pedagogical or instructional) roles these teacher-educators play in teacher education programs while preparing future teachers (i.e., the prospective teachers).

Reflecting on the above-mentioned beliefs and practices of teaching and learning in educational institutions in Pakistan a number of education reforms have been made, although a significant change has not been observed. For instance, adoption of public sector schools by private education providers to improve quality of teaching and learning could not bring a positive change in the practices in schools in Pakistan (Ali & Niyozov, 2018). One of the reasons behind this failure could be a low level of teaching and learning practices in schools, where teachers appear to be less aware of their roles as pedagogical leaders, but remain unknowingly focused on an instructional role. Being unaware of the difference between instructional and pedagogical roles, these teacher-educators appear to be silent on the implications of their roles.

Teachers as Pedagogical Leaders

Teachers who use their pedagogical leadership role in their teaching and learning demonstrate a philosophy of learner-centered teaching. Tajik (2019/in press) argues that pedagogical leadership ‘essentially is the study of teaching and learning process and understanding how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that support that understanding of learning’ (p. 8). To this end, teacher educators appear to be fully aware of how learners learn, what are their levels of learning, what are the individual needs of students in the class and how can a teacher educator enable them to excel in their learning depending upon their own philosophical orientation towards a ‘practical interest of education’ (Habermas, 1972). Thus, it appears to be very challenging for an educator to perform a pedagogical leader’ role if educators are not well versed in the kind of philosophy that guides their practices. Educators having such strong beliefs in pedagogical leadership can better facilitate and enable their future teachers as compared with educators with an instructional leadership philosophy.

On similar lines, Male and Palaiogou (2012) also express their views that pedagogical leadership is ‘a construct which places knowledge creation and management ahead of knowledge transmission’ (p.107). Thus, teachers as pedagogical leaders can play a significant role in providing an effective learning environment that fosters student

learning. These pedagogical leaders serve as human capital by “helping schools become caring, focused, and inquiring communities within which teachers [and others] work together as members of the community of practice” (p.37) in order to improve student learning outcomes (Sergiovanni, 1998, p.37). These views clearly support the philosophical underpinnings of teacher-educators as pedagogical leaders who are committed to creating a caring, enabling and facilitating environment in the classroom.

Alameen et al. (2015) and Author (2016) supported the views that a pedagogical leader’s role in the classroom is not only focusing on how to improve teaching and learning, but it is about how to convert a theoretical or philosophical view into action which makes better sense in a particular socio-cultural and socio-pedagogical context. Thus, it is the leadership of the teacher with ‘a pedagogy of engaging in reflective thinking and inquiry for creating community of learners’ (Tajik, 2019/in press, p.6), who not only develop their own understanding of the text and context but also contribute to the learning of others in the class. Thus, teachers as pedagogical leaders not only inspire students to become confident, self-directed learners but also empower them to be creative and innovative in their search for meaning making and contextualizing the text in their own lifeworld. Thus, the outcome of learning remains on middle order and beyond thinking skills of prospective teachers by engaging them in applying and analyzing the knowledge they receive in their lives (in their classrooms and beyond).

Teacher as Instructional Leader

Instructional leaders believe in a teacher-centered approach to teaching and they believe in self as an authority on the subject matter and a great source of knowledge. Resultantly, their focus remains on limited learning outcomes of students that lead them to neglect the individual talents of students in their classes (Male & Palaiogou, 2012). Thus, the outcome of their teaching remains to produce prospective teachers as lower order thinkers who may hardly focus on remembering and understanding levels of knowledge that they gain.

The metaphor of *teachers as instructional leaders* explains how these teachers’ beliefs and notions lead them to consider the self as knowledgeable, act as perfect guides and expect their learners to re/produce the knowledge that they transfer through an instructional model of teaching. These beliefs and actions of teachers define and shape the classroom culture, where learners are supposed to be less critical yet obedient followers of their teachers (Habermas, 1972). Thus, educators as instructional leaders appear to be believers of the banking concept of education, where *teachers as ‘transferrers’* of knowledge expect their learners to reproduce the same text whatsoever the context might be (Author, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study approach appears more appropriate to gather relevant data in order to explore the key research questions: what are the perceptions of teacher-educators about prospective-teachers as instructional or pedagogical leaders, and how a gender lens makes sense in terms of the performance of future teachers (Yin, 2012). The researchers used two tools of data collection within this design – focused group discussion, and semi-structured interviews from the research participants. The researchers selected two groups of teacher-educators purposively to gather data that is based on their perception, feelings, and experience (Morgan, 1988; Ochieng, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). One of the groups of teacher-educators was selected from university, while the other was selected from the college of education.

The criteria for the selection of these two groups of educators were: educators with at least five years of teaching experience as teacher educator in their respective field of teaching prospective-teachers at B. Ed (Hons) Elementary or an Associate Degree in Education; teacher-educators in these two groups were selected 1:1 (one male and one female educator); and at least one educator in each group had to be a lecturer or an instructor, an assistant professor or equal position. The number of participants in each focus group is four based on the given criteria (Burrows & Kendall, 1997). These two focused groups were separately interviewed (i.e., providing a chance to discuss the research questions facilitated by the researchers to let the participants remain focused on the discussion and help each member in the group to participate) to explore their views in a very friendly environment by discussing the key research question and emerging questions related to the topic. Thus, the focus group discussion enabled the researchers to gather relevant data on the topic in a friendly manner to get powerful insights of the phenomena under exploration (Ochieng, *et al.*, 2018; Krueger, 1988; Stewart, & Shamdasani, 1990). A focus group discussion is a powerful tool of data collection that enables the researchers to get a clear point of view of a group about the phenomena under discussion (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Therefore, exploring the views of teacher-educators in both institutions about prospective-teachers' role as instructional or pedagogical leaders through focus group discussions enabled the researchers to gather a rich amount of data.

The researchers also used semi-structured interviews of two faculty members one from the university and one from the college of education (the two research sites as the sample of study). The purpose of selecting only two participants for an in-depth semi-structured interview is to gather a rich array of data from both participants in their respective institutional natural settings (Yin, 2014). For an in-depth exploration, the researcher/s needed to focus on a small number of research participants to interview (a semi-structured one) within a case study approach to research (Brown, 2008; Creswell, 2013). Thus, this approach enabled the participants to express their deep-rooted views, beliefs and perceptions about their own orientation as teacher-

educators, and their ways of teaching to future teachers (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). These interviews facilitated in probing and collecting the data at saturation level, which helped the researchers to make better sense of their deep-rooted beliefs and reflection (Yin, 2012) in the light of their rich experiences of teacher education institutions in Pakistan. As data analysis is an ongoing process of classifying, categorizing, and meaning-making process, the researchers recorded (i.e., audio taped ideas of research participants in both 45 minute semi-structured interviews with two faculty members and 90 minute long FGDs) minute sets of data coming from these two different sources. (Thus, to authenticate the findings the researchers remained very careful to find similar and different views emerging from different sources of the data. Then, the researchers tried to develop broader categories of the themes while engaging in the process of data analysis (Author & Khaki, 2014; Author & Poudel, 2014; see also Stake, 1995). In so doing, the researchers came up with key themes out of a critical engagement with data sets to make better sense of the views of research participants in response to the research questions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION:

The analysis of the data revealed that there exists a diverse range of gender-related perspectives of teacher-educators who perceive prospective-teachers in many roles. These are gender wise roles (male and female) and teaching roles (pedagogical and instructional). However, it was revealed that the teaching roles were highly influenced by the teacher-educators' personal orientation towards their teaching guided by a philosophy that they adopted while teaching these prospective-teachers. Following are the key thematic areas which highlight key findings of this study.

Teacher-educators' Orientations towards Teaching

It was revealed that those teacher-educators who believe in the instructional role of teachers tend to use a top-down approach to teaching. It appears that the teachers who believe in teaching as instruction, knowingly or unknowingly use education as banking. The concept of education as banking is the Freirean perspective (i.e., Paulo Freire' view of education) which focuses on a teacher centered approach to teaching where the teacher tends to store information in the minds of students (Author, 2016; Freire, 1970). Resultantly, students, the prospective-teachers, are trained in such a way that they would similarly demonstrate in teaching when they will engage with teaching practice. On the other hand, Freire (1998) calls 'Teachers as Cultural Workers' who create a classroom culture that is more conducive to learners and use their creativity rather than becoming a recipient of the knowledge. During the focused group discussions, educators expressed their views in these words:

We send our future teachers in schools for teaching practice, which we usually call practicum, to see how they demonstrate in their teaching classes and apply the knowledge gain during their course. Basically,

our focus is to see in what ways these student teachers teach their students, and how they ensure classroom management while teaching students in schools (FGD 20, 2018).

This view of teacher-educators shows that it is the teacher-educators who trained prospective-teachers as instructional leaders. They expect their future teachers to use teaching as controlling students (i.e., to ensure classroom management) in their class and deliver their lessons to instruct (i.e., to teach) their students to acquire the knowledge they want to impart (Author & Poudel, 2014). This means that teacher-educators personally believe that teaching should be an activity to impart education from the source of knowledge to the receivers at the end (the students in the class). On the other hand, one of the teacher-educators expressed her views of how an educator's orientation may facilitate or hinder the use of a particular approach to teaching in these words:

To me, whatever the background and or the orientation of teacher-educators might be, the most important factor to consider in the class is the background of the prospective-teachers. Because it is the background of students who are coming from a diverse range of academic settings that highly impact on the teaching approaches of educators (interview, February 19, 2019).

What is worth thinking about is what kind of future students are in your class since a teacher educator has to adopt a particular approach to teaching. She further explained that 'I use questions and try to push everyone in the class to speak, but most of the time I noticed few students respond and rest try to remain silent'. She continued expressing her views that 'see what I can do in such a situation in the class of a diverse group of learners [learning levels]. Ultimately, I had to switch to a teacher-centered approach unwillingly to achieve the objectives of course outlines'. One of the interesting things she shared in the interview was that 'if the institution provides full liberty to educators to focus only on ... learning of the students then it is possible to use teaching as pedagogical leaders' (Interview, February 19, 2019).

These views of education open avenues for rethinking teacher education practices in the context of Pakistan and beyond (Tajik, 2019/in press). Teacher education institutions need to reflect not only on teaching and learning but also the need to reflect on the curriculum because all these components respond to each other in a retrospective manner. For instance, if institutions believe in a curriculum as reproduction and/or a curriculum as an official document (i.e., the textbook) then it is quite possible to use teaching approaches as instructional or teacher-centered. Whereas if institutions believe in a curriculum as experience (Dewey, 1938), curriculum as currere (Pinar, 2004, 2012, 2014) and curriculum as mosaic (Luitel,

2009), the focus of teachers and teacher-educators would be on pedagogical approaches to teaching.

View of Teacher-educators about Prospective-teachers

Analysis of the data revealed that teacher-educators have different views about the role of prospective-teachers. These roles are: future teachers as pedagogical leaders; prospective-teachers as instructional leaders; and female student teachers are more active with higher scores than male student teachers.

Future teachers as pedagogical leaders

Exploring the views of teacher-educators some of the research participants had expressed their views that prospective-teachers play their role as pedagogical leaders. These future teachers are trained during their courses in such a way that they can demonstrate as facilitative teachers in future (FGD, October 2018). Similarly, in the semi-structured interview, one of the research participants expressed his views in these words,

I used to teach as co-teacher with my prospective-teachers. I give roles to my students as members of the team teaching. This approach to teaching enabled me to observe my student teachers during their demonstrations in practicum. I think, as teacher-educators, we can develop these future teachers either a facilitator or a dictator for their future classes. So, we need to be very careful in our dealing with student teachers while we engage with them during the semester course (Interview, February 10, 2019).

These views of research participants showed that it is the teaching culture that derives from the practices of teacher-educators who engage their future teachers in a diverse range of degree programs. Educators who believe in team teaching and learners' facilitation and empowerment tend to use pedagogies which are enabling and learning focused. This culture of teaching shows teacher-educators are more empowered and can justify their approaches to teaching by using pedagogical roles.

Future teachers as instructional leaders

Teachers who for one or the other reasons adopt a teacher-centered approach to teaching develop an environment of teaching and learning that encourage future teachers to demonstrate in similar ways (Ahmed, 2013; Author, 2016). In a focused group discussion, it was noted that the teacher-educators who used an instructional approach to teaching create a culture of teaching which ultimately impacts on student teachers. Resultantly, these future teachers adopt similar approaches to teaching in practicum classes and can be expected to use in future schools (FGD, October 20,

2018). Similar views were revealed during semi-structured interviews, and one teacher-educator expressed her views in these words,

In my view, teacher-educators' approach to adopting a particular way of teaching highly depends upon the nature of students and their ability plus the demands of the course to complete in a limited time frame. How it is possible for me as an educator to adopt a pedagogical role and engage students in creative and innovative ways of learning. Thus, in such a situation I used a teacher-centered approach to teaching.

Difference between male and female student teachers' performance

One of the research participants stated that 'female teachers are performing well as compared to male student teachers... the high scorers for the last many years are the girls, not the boys so, it is clear in our context that girls are more active than boys' (Interviews, Feb 2019). Whereas literature appears to oppose the views of these research findings. Osyerman (2019) claims that ... 'boys are brilliant, while girls are hard workers' (p. 17). This shows that in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan female prospective-teachers are performing better than male prospective-teachers with specific reference to their high scores in semester exams, presentations, and other activities during teacher education programs.

CONCLUSION

Teacher education institutions in Pakistan have a long history of training prospective-teachers to fulfill the needs and demands of schools, colleges, and universities. However, it is very critical to know why some teacher-educators, in these future teachers preparing institutions, adopt a particular approach to teaching. To this end, literature seems silent in this particular context to explore why teacher education institutions focus mostly on teachers as instructional leaders as compare to teachers as pedagogical leaders. Moreover, this study came up with a new addition to the literature that not only focuses on to explore this issue (i.e., mostly educators tend to use instructional roles...) but also looks at the problem through a gender lens. In so doing, the researcher came to know that female student teachers are more active and score higher than male student teachers in these teacher education institutions. One of the approaches to teaching, which mostly appears to be prominent in these institutions, is an instructional approach that un/willingly influences future teachers to demonstrate behaviors modeling their educators. As a result of using such approaches to teaching at degree level teacher educational institutions, prospective teachers tend to apply similar approaches in their teaching which focus on remembering and understanding the level of knowledge. Teachers as pedagogical leaders is yet another approach to teaching that some educators tend to use in these institutions in spite of many challenges such as completing the centralized scheme of studies, limited

number of credit hours and other limitations etc. The outcome of teaching of educators as pedagogical leaders is to inspire and train future teachers (i.e. prospective teachers) as pedagogical leaders who can better facilitate their students in their learning as compared to future teachers as instructional leaders. Teachers as pedagogical leaders not only focus on basics such as remembering and understanding (i.e. the core focus of instructional leaders) but also on advance levels of learning that is applying and analyzing Blooms' Taxonomy (Anderson, L., & Krathwoh, 2001; Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956).).

Thus, the study revealed that it is the teacher-educators as cultural workers who develop an enabling culture of teaching and learning that influence their student teachers (Freire, 1998) as pedagogical leaders as opposed to teachers as bankers that are knowledge transmitters (Freire, 1970). On the basis of this study's findings, teacher educators are suggested to think critically about their role as pedagogical leaders as well as instructional leaders. Perhaps, their own critical reflections on their views and practices will enable them to justify whether they are pedagogical leaders or instructional leaders. However, it is clear from the literature as well as the contribution of this study that pedagogical leaders are educators who believe in and practice a learner centered approach. These leaders tend to focus on empowerment and facilitation rather than instruction and theoretical guidelines for their students. Teacher education institutions need to reflect on the philosophical views of instructional and pedagogical leadership of teacher educators and need to adopt a particular leadership role in their teaching and learning which creates conditions for more facilitation, empowerment and support to students in order to learn powerfully.

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