

Educational Leadership for Social Justice: A Study of Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the leadership practices of educational leaders with reference to social justice. A constructivist qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was used to collect the data. All public sector secondary schools of Sindh and all heads of the institutes are included in the population. Thirty-five heads of the institute and thirty-five public secondary schools (N=35) are the sample size were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The data was collected through an in-depth interview schedule. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis. This study is limited to public secondary schools in Sindh, Pakistan. This study also limited the stakeholders, such as heads of educational institutes in Sindh, Pakistan. Major findings of the study inform that educational leaders know and understand the concept of social justice in the school and classroom. According to them, social justice promotes fairness and equity across many aspects of society with the safety and security of individuals and communities. Furthermore, it is found that admissions in schools are given based on merit without discrimination of race, religion, gender, or socio-economic status. Mostly, heads maintain discipline in schools by somewhat following and implementing the rules and regulations for all students. It is ensured in schools that all students should get respect and a conducive classroom learning environment. School heads ensure fair assessment of learning at all levels. Heads deliver a high-quality curriculum, teaching, and learning experience in schools. Heads of institutes provide facilities like pure drinking water, stationery items, books, and school uniforms, safe and secure environment. It is also found that heads of the institutes provide information and resources to all students on an equality and equity basis. Therefore, it recommended that the Education and Literacy Department Government of Sindh should arrange professional development opportunities for the heads of the institutes in the area of social justice. This study can guide the heads of the institutes to improve their practices according to the need of students.

Keywords: Social Justice, educational leadership, policy, and practices

Introduction

Education plays a significant role in the development of society. Social harmony, social control, social justice, security, safety, and employment opportunities are the concepts that are directly connected with education, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. The protection of social inequities, such as corruption, injustices, political involvement, nepotism, general inefficiency, ignoring merit, etc., is directly allied with the quality education that State provides to every citizen. These factors also create educational inequality (Khan, 2020).

Schools should be more than just places to learn; they should be places of action & change, promoting a more socially equitable world for all. To achieve social justice, educational leadership must be both imaginative and pragmatic. Educational leaders face great responsibilities with significant challenges. To overcome these challenges, teacher leaders and management can promote a model of Educational Leadership for Social Justice that serves all stakeholders as a navigation device through the school enhancement process. The main barriers to social justice are low-quality education and inadequate educational facilities, particularly in the secondary school sector in Sindh, Pakistan. Generally, quality education is linked with the effectiveness the efficiency of educational institutes (Mahmood, 2011). Naz (2019) provides an excellent review of educational & social justice. According to her, in searching for social justice in the field of education, educational leadership for social justice in the education is needed to inform what is suitable for students, which thing protects them, how rights/resources should be distributed, and what the principles of managing an equity-oriented environment are. Therefore, two principles emerge that can lead the educational leadership to a unified social justice approach in the education field:

1. Fair and equality of environment ensure that various groups have equal access to learners is enhanced by evolving everyone's capabilities. Fair equality of environment focuses on all students treating equally and providing all students with equal rights.

2. Schools should deliver a high-quality curriculum, teaching, and learning experience.

Article 25 (A) of the Pakistani Constitution, 1973 states that everyone has equal rights to acquire education, which means education for all children. Leadership does not mean a leader get their benefit, and a leader means to stand with other, aspire to others for social change environment and society respond to humans needs and values, which are necessary for life spending. Leadership is a crucial aspect in the refining of learning for students as the field of educational leadership influences educational leadership policy and practice. An excellent educational leader may be able to make appropriate changes to make education more social.

Numerous researchers are likewise investigating the importance and nature of social justice leaders through sentiment; social justice arranged principals, associate principals, and instructor leaders (Capper & Young, 2014). Traditionally, schools have been held answerable for the learning outcomes of students as well as extensive goals like "promoting effective citizenship for a different social equality" (Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

Statement of the Problem

As Ansar and Hussain (2014) acknowledge, education is the only way to impart knowledge, skills, feelings, values, etc., to other people to change their behavior. Moreover, the effectiveness of educational institutes is associated with the effectiveness of leadership positions for social justice in secondary schools. Hence, it ensures that the effective running of educational institutes means quality education, fair access to all students, and equal opportunity for all learners in schools. The school needs to change according to global innovation to improve quality education. However, these things cannot be achieved without knowledge, experience, skills, etc., and the head of the institute plays a vital role in implementing and managing innovation changes. These changes can be addressed through educational leadership for social justice action. The Head of the institute is responsible for the effective running of the school, and heads are required to have authority and resources to perform this role effectively (Riaz et al., 2011).

Moreover, the effectiveness of educational institutes is associated with the effectiveness of leadership positions for social justice in secondary schools. The school needs to change according to global innovation to improve quality education. Identifying the practices in each factor (beliefs and practices) of social justice in the education field, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, is essential. A social justice lens, in particular, is indispensable for educational leaders to make socially just decisions. To overcome this gap, the present study is designed. This research explored the perception of heads of institutes about epistemological beliefs and practices for social justice in secondary schools. This research study supports school heads (Sindh) working with students in under-resourced communities and society.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the epistemological beliefs of educational leaders about Social Justice in Public Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan.
2. To investigate the leadership practices of the educational leaders with reference to social Justice in Public Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. What are the epistemological beliefs of educational leaders about Social Justice in Public Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan?
2. What are the leadership practices of the educational leaders with reference to social Justice in Public Secondary Schools of Sindh, Pakistan?

Scope of the Study

In developing countries like Pakistan, the education sector is constantly suspended of resources, structural upgrades, statutory reform, short- and long-term goals and plans, favoritism, and political and demographic priorities (Haider & Sultan, 2008). Therefore, this study is conducted in Sindh, Pakistan, to ponder the possibilities of improved education with less inequality. The scope of this study involved the stakeholders, such as heads of institutes. This research study is steered to determine the epistemology beliefs and practices of educational leaders for social justice in public secondary schools of Sindh.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to public secondary schools in Sindh, Pakistan. Therefore, this study also limited the stakeholders, such as heads of educational institutes in Sindh, Pakistan.

Literature review

Concept of leadership

Leadership is the practice of directing people to accomplish aims and targets. Leadership is how communities of people are manipulated to achieve an objective. Leadership is frequently used as a process whereby people compel others to do something themselves, either because they are necessary or because they fear that disobedience is burdensome. The leadership principle is based on two prominent roles: first, leadership, and second, power exercise. Many of these activities can be performed in various ways, and this variety can distinguish between many kinds of leadership (Iqbal, 2010).

Educational Leadership

Educational Leadership is one of the most effective ways of achieving academic objectives, transferring new knowledge to a new generation, and advancing the whole education system (Joubish & Khurram, 2011). An educator leader embodies the characteristics and abilities that make him successful and efficient in any situation. Educational leadership is typically related to a formal hierarchical role in classrooms.

Educational leaders are also responsible for monitoring subordinates' performance to improve it. This also allows the leaders to provide additional guidance and advice to their subordinates. However, it should be carried out, so the subordinates are not hurt (Prendergast & Humphrey, 2014).

Concept of Social Justice

According to Fleurbaey (2018), the concept of social justice is linked to people's interests in culture and society. According to the study, social justice eradicates inequality in societal culture. Social Justice is an essential feature of a community or culture based on human rights and democratic values. According to Nieuwenhuis (2011), social justice necessitates an assortment of principles, such as vision, which saturates all aspects of human existence. The term "social justice" is used in this research study to refer to the equitable distribution of facilities, funding, classroom settings, inclusive education, human rights, and student opportunities. Schools should provide services and facilities based on social justice values if all students have equal access to facilities and their civil rights are protected (Opotow, 2012).

Berg and Gleason (2018) refer to social justice as a general term for activities meant to foster fairness, respect, and equality among individuals. Therefore, it is necessary to frequently review and reevaluate continuously. Social justice is a basic right, legal equality, basic privileges, the performance of tasks, observance of legal and social obligations, and steadfast faith in the importance of justice, liberty, equality, community, and self-respect of the student personality are all examples of social justice ideals.

The desire for social justice in our society is essential to recognize. In other words, others can see its value more clearly when framing social justice in the sense of social oppression. Academic success allows all students to continue to face inequality in the classroom; it promotes social justice in schools. Leaders build trust with all stakeholders who participate in the society that schools characterize and look for ways to connect schools and the community to achieve social Justice (McCann & Ward, 2012; Theoharis, 2008).

Table 1.

Professional Standards for Social Justice

Professional Standards for Social Justice

- Promote educational and societal values of sustainability, equity, and fairness at home and abroad, while respecting the rights and responsibilities of future and current generations.
 - Adhere to democratic and social justice values in age, sex and sexual orientation, disabilities, race, gender, religion, and faith.
 - Constrain to politics and procedures that are fair, transparent, and progressive.
 - All learners should cherish, uphold, and nurture the principles of local and global citizenship while respecting social, cultural, and ecological variety.
 - Demonstrate a dedication to involving students in real-world challenges to improve learning outcomes and performance and pave the road for a successful future.
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Source: The Office of Multicultural Affairs (2014).

Table 1 indicates the standards of Social Justice in the Professional Standards.

Figure 1.

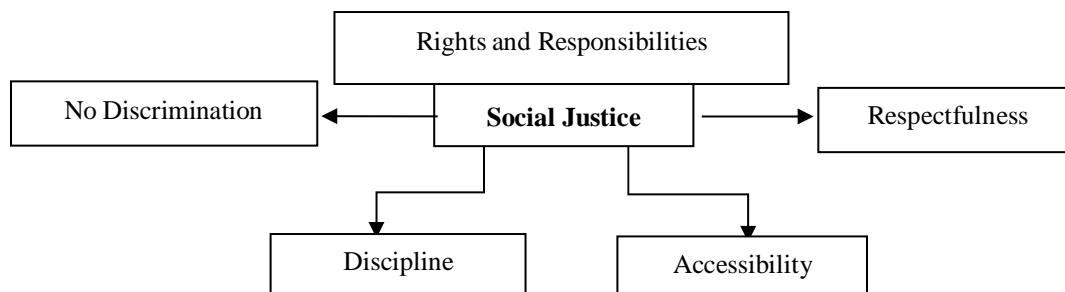


Figure 1. Areas covered in social justice

Figure 1. clarifies the area covered in social justice.

Social Justice Leadership

Social justice leadership recognizes inequities, provides inclusive education for all, creates a learning environment in secondary schools, and keeps all sources organized (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). However, it is a fact that if there is an academy or secondary school, there are various uphill difficulties, from the framework of dynamics that develops common societal justice and hierarchal situations and problems, while the exercise inculcates:

- (a) To inspect the curriculum at the secondary level to know the cultures and high expectations of the community.
- (b) Identify oppressive and suppressive unfair exercises being carried out.
- (c) To gain the democratic processes to engage deprived people, communities, learned faculty, and allied staff.

According to the study by Hassan et al. (2015), the head of the institute must know students' backgrounds before using social justice practices to face irreverent issues in school. Schools establishing an equitable school culture, fair, conducive teaching and learning environment for all students is best accomplished in the classroom that remains a solid inhibitor to providing social justice in education (Ansar & Hussain, 2014). It requires that every school head or educational leader take responsibility for protecting, advancing, and promoting the values, principles, and ideals of social justice in education. Furthermore, for the student learning environment in the schools, the head must know about professional development and create one-on-one mentoring, coaching, and planning for professional development practices. The head of the institute needs to be culturally responsive, know their students, be open to change, and have substantial pedagogical content knowledge.

Concept of Social Justice in Neighboring Countries

Social Justice Leadership in India Schools

According to Bajpai (2011), one of the most contentious issues in social justice is group rights and fair treatment. Social Justice reflects how human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society in India.

In India, leaders exercised social justice in different ways depending on the context and the pupils they served. For example, the more affluent schools tended to emphasize teaching about social justice and helping others. On the other

hand, the leader of the less affluent school was more concerned with allowing pupils to move out of poverty and improve their social standing (Richardson & Sauer, 2014).

In the curriculum, content must be incorporated with activities to build self-awareness among diverse students and should help practices of school heads to a broader understanding of students' cultural identities, how their cultures influence their worldviews, beliefs, and biases, and how their identities connect with power, privilege, and oppression (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). For example, in India, the goal of schools for cultivating cultural humility during learning activities is to establish a learning environment where deep and critical self-examination can be done without shame or fear (Mosher et al., 2017).

The leaders responded to societal requirements by focusing on education, admissions procedures, and community service (Richardson & Sauer, 2014). As Lerman and Weaver (2014) concluded, leaders must practice treating all students and teachers with respect and dignity. Juarez et al. (2006) evaluated a curriculum to foster cultural humility among different students. They found that students improved their self-awareness and relationship-building in interactions with diverse students in the classroom due to the curriculum.

Social Justice leadership in Bangladesh Schools

A study by Rodas and Osborn (2016) says social justice in education enhances the learners' cognitive ideas about instructional inequalities and pushes them to desired developments.

School leaders continually sought to integrate social justice education into teacher education programs, and students were actively participating in developing a social justice disposition. Education leaders should provide their students with access to perspectives on and information that can liberate them in terms of how they think about the world, power, and structures, as well as how they modify those systems. In their work, school leaders assist students, teachers, and communities in designing education that benefits the entire community (Charis & Ronald, 2017). In Bangladesh, educational officials place a premium on children learning across race, class, gender, language, exceptionality, and other barriers in the classroom (Dover, 2013).

Leaders are given the authority to rethink curriculum instruction to improve schools and empower students, teachers, administrators, and community members to fight curriculum that has been male, white, privileged, in power, and has perpetuated a lack of choice (Charis & Ronald, 2017).

Social Justice Leadership in Nepal Schools

In Nepal, leaders promote social justice through effective teaching & learning, developing students' social capital, creating solid school communities, & cultivating educational cultures in families that serve different student populations (i.e., working with parents). According to Kumar (2013), it is at the heart of injustice in Nepal supports and exacerbates the persistent poverty & marginalization many people face. Social justice can be attained only by creating broad policies of inclusion in every government domain. In Nepal, head teachers' conceptions of social justice are primarily concerned with the well-being of pupils, with acknowledgment of inequities and broader societal inclusion difficulties.

In Nepal, it is a need for professional development training for head teachers. However, most heads appear to be thinking about practice in broader terms of leadership, identifying impediments to social justice, & collaborating with other stakeholders (John et al., 2019). Heads must make parents and children feel appreciated and welcomed in the school. Heads of schools should collaborate with stakeholders and seek their input on crucial school choices for Social Justice (Rasheed et al., 2016).

Social Justice Leadership in Sri Lanka Schools

In Sri Lanka, heads of institutes contribute enormously to creating effective schools, and achieving academic quality is considered one of the foundations of successful schools (Witziers et al., 2019). To build a positive learning environment, school leaders must understand how to develop and improve the school environment. When the head of a school gives orders to enhance the teaching and learning process, supply learning resources, and motivate teachers and students, the goal is to increase the quality of education for students through equality and equity (Tedla, 2012).

Leaders must engage with and acknowledge their country's accountability-oriented and decentralization initiatives. Successful leaders who work with Students promote social justice by employing appropriate teaching and learning methods, building social capital in children, developing school communities, and cultivating educational cultures in families (Dahal et al., 2019).

According to Witziers et al. (2019), for Social Justice in Sri Lanka, leaders take responsibility for the betterment of education in respect of no gender discrimination and no violation in institutes and provide all learning facilities for all students.

Methods

This study is constructivist and exploratory. Therefore, the methodology used for this study is the qualitative methodology. The qualitative methodology defines or explores a particular social phenomenon by keeping its context in the background and using different sources of data collection (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2003).

The present study is conducted by the phenomenology method. Phenomenology is the qualitative research methodology that emphasizes the cohesion of a lived experience within a particular group.

Population and Sampling of the Study

All public secondary schools of Sindh, and all heads of the institutes of Sindh, Pakistan, is the population of this study. Purposive sampling techniques were used in this research study. Sindh Province was divided into six divisions, and five public secondary schools were selected (N=35). In this regard, a cross-sectional survey was conducted to explore the perceptions of one head of the institutes from each school.

Table 2.

Government Secondary Schools (Boys & Girls) in Sindh, Pakistan

S.No:	Category	Total Secondary Schools
1	Public Secondary Schools	1777
2	Head of the institutes	1777

Source: School Education & Literacy Department Government of Sindh Report, 2019

Table 2. indicates that there are one thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven public secondary schools (boys and girls) in Sindh, Pakistan. Thirty-five schools and thirty-five heads were selected from these schools in this research study.

Research Instruments

The interview technique is the research instrument of this study. An individual face-to-face semi-structured interview schedule was used in the interview technique instrument.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Method

The method of testing the data collection tool or instrument for trustworthiness was used in this study to verify the validity of the collected data. This research achieved trustworthiness by adhering to the methodological norms of semi-structured interviews and ensuring that they satisfied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Furthermore, before administering interview questions, it is essential for a semi-structured instrument that whether respondents understand the questions and how much time it will take to respond. For this purpose, the two subject experts examined the semi-structured interview instruments to check the contents of the open-ended questions for the accuracy of data.

After this process, data was collected through conducting semi-structured interviews face to face individually with heads of secondary schools in Sindh.

The data analysis began with transcription details of the data followed by Creswell's (2009) six steps of thematic analysis. Themes, sub-themes, and codes are generated from the collected raw data. This is called a splitting procedure of data analysis. Through this method, the researcher can separate the work systematically and make a judgment at each level.

Results

Theme One: Epistemological Beliefs of Educational Leaders about Social Justice Knowledge and Beliefs of Social Justice

Educational leaders have positive beliefs about social justice. According to them, social justice requires all learners to have equal opportunities to gain quality education without discrimination, and educational institutes have to organize equitable learning for all learners. They have to provide facilities, such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, furniture, and equipment in a preferable condition.

Moreover, it is needed to pave the way for all students to gain competency without exception and excuse, to reduce illiteracy, and provide free and compulsory education through innovative and creative faculty professional

development programs through in-service training. It also requires introducing procedures and processes to standardize and institutionalize teacher training, accreditation, and certification for quality education. It is found that educational leaders know and understand the concept of social justice. They realize that it means equality, equity, treating everyone equally or all are equal without any discrimination, justice for all, providing equal support to all, equal human rights for all, and education for all without discrimination of race, gender, language, status, religion, and culture. Therefore, everyone has a right to attain education, human rights, and justice without discrimination.

Theme Two: Practices of Educational Leaders about Social Justice
Existing Practices of Social Justice in Secondary Schools

The practices of educational leaders were linked with educational policies. Mostly, heads visited classes regularly and sent teachers to classes on time, and in case of teachers' absence, makeup classes were arranged by the school heads. Mostly, assemblies were conducted by heads regularly, and parent-teacher meetings were arranged regularly by the heads of institutes.

Heads see all students equally and provide all learning material for achieving educational goals, and heads always motivate teachers to create and maintain a sympathetic relationship with students and parents. Educational leaders encourage students from various backgrounds to participate in multiple educational activities and promote welfare, honors, dignity, and a sense of responsibility among learners and teachers.

Heads of the institute provide all information and resources equally and equitably to all disabled (physically) and non-disabled students through class teachers, subject teachers, notice boards, circulars, and class prefects. Heads provided learning opportunities to all students while maintaining discipline with sympathy and coordination, and admissions were given to students based on humanitarian grounds. Students were informed when schools were open after the closing of the COVID-19 situation, and training and faculty development programs were arranged for teachers to improve their weak areas and understand the concept of social justice.

Conclusion

Educational leaders know and understand the concept of social justice in the classroom and school. According to them, social justice promotes fairness and equity across many aspects of society. For example, it promotes equal economic, educational, and workplace opportunities. It's also essential to the safety and security of individuals and communities. Leadership practices are maintained by the heads of institutes through sympathy, taking on board all students, teachers, and parents. The heads of schools ensure that all students should get respect and a conducive classroom learning environment. School heads provide a fair assessment of learning at all levels. Heads deliver a high-quality curriculum, teaching, and learning experience in schools. They are arranging parent-teacher meetings and facilities, i.e., pure drinking water and security guards in schools by the heads of institutes. Heads provide books, pens, transport facilities, and school dresses for poor students and sometimes invite civil society people to resolve issues and discuss the best way for the betterment of the future of the institute. From the heads, directions were given to parents for sending students regularly to school and informed parents about their child's absence. Subjects were allocated to teachers on subject specialties and interests. Daily, it emphasizes students to stay disciplined and clean and respect teachers and parents.

Information and resources were provided without discrimination based on need, rules, and regulation through the assembly, class teacher, notice board, social media, circular, and visiting classes. The institutional head approved the police station outside the school for safety and security, arranged pure drinking water and solar system for students and staff, constructed spoiled boundary walls, and upgraded the school from class six to matric. Schools were warm and welcoming to all disabled (physically) and non-disabled; heads provided equal learning opportunities for all students to participate in different activities. Based on humanity, admissions were given to students, and after admission, the school offered monthly scholarships to needy students.

Recommendations

Through leadership practices, the social justice concept is being implemented in secondary schools; therefore, the following are the recommendations for the heads of the institutes.

- Basic facilities may provide to students based on equality and equity without any discrimination.
- The school heads should arrange professional development and training for teachers to familiarize them with social justice, such as; no discrimination, respectfulness, accessibility, discipline, rights, and responsibilities in the school.

- The head of the institute may monitor the teaching-learning process in the light of social justice by visiting classes and regularly checking the class timetable of teachers.
- Subjects should be allocated to teachers according to their interests and specialties.
- The active role of civil society should include in the decision-making process through SMC to improve quality education in the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study made the following recommendations for further studies:

- This study was focused only on secondary schools, so this research recommends that a similar study is conducted for future pre-primary, primary, and higher educational institutes.
- A qualitative approach was employed in this study. In the future, conduct mixed-methodology research to get a clear picture of the respondents' beliefs and social justice practices.
- In this study, the population is limited to the secondary school of Sindh. It is recommended that similar research be conducted in other provinces of Pakistan and that findings be compared and contrasted.
- This study was conducted in Govt. schools, but in the future, this type of study may also be conducted in private schools.

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