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## A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES TEACHERS: BUILDING CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore how social studies teachers conceptualised democracy, developed ideas about democratic citizenship and implemented their perspectives and experiences into teaching. The study used a phenomenological approach to qualitative research design. Total 528 students and 50 teachers were selected using a purposive sampling method with data analysed by Moustakas's transcendental approach. The participants conceptualised democracy as a political system, civic participation and influence of government decision-making. They developed ideas about democratic citizenship from multiple sources, such as family members, networking, citizenship projects, professional development training, political engagement, travel, and involvement in community services. Teachers implemented their perspectives by utilising experiential learning, incorporating student's ideas into teaching methods and employing technology. Other findings that emerged included the educator's inadequate preparation of instructional strategies and student's apathetic responses to learning about the democratic process. This study reveals the need for educators, teachers, and policymakers to collaborate to develop instructional practices, incorporate experiential learning experiences and improve social studies curricula to promote student engagement.

*Keywords: Phenomenology; Conceptualised democracy; Democratic citizenship.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Teaching about democracy and perspectives on democratic citizenship, teachers are on the front lines of society (Goodlad et al., 2008). When performing a key responsibility like teaching social studies. It is important to understand how instructors conceptualise democracy and establish viewpoints on democratic citizenship. It combines their thoughts and experiences into their teaching methods and strategies. The primary objective of social studies instruction should always be to prepare students for citizenship in a democratic society. The main objective of social studies instruction has also been citizenship across the three social studies divisions. Fundamentally, the objective of social studies curricula is to promote democratic citizenry. The main goal of social studies education is to assist young people in making informed decisions for the greater good as citizens of a democratic society with a diverse population. In a society that is dependent on the entire globe, democratic citizens exhibit the traits of informed citizens.

The main objective of social studies education is to prepare students to think critically and solve problems in a democratic society. Standards for Social Studies emphasise the following, notwithstanding the fact that there are inconsistencies between theory and practice, notably when teaching contentious topics like civic ideals and practises. Teachers of social studies should instil in their students the subject knowledge,

cognitive skills and civic ideals necessary to fulfil their civic obligations in a participatory democracy. Experiences that allow for the study of the ideas, tenets, and customs of citizenship in a democratic republic should be incorporated into social studies courses. The development of capable individuals who can participate in the democratic process is the proclaimed aim of social studies education. Citizenship is emphasised in social studies. Democracy is not merely an administrative system. It is basically a way of living in a community and sharing experiences with others. The family is second in importance to the classroom as a shared communicative experience of connected life. Given that democracy is taught in both the classroom and at home. It is everyone's job to provide pupils with the information they need to engage in a democratic society.

These fundamental ideas emphasise the critical relationship between human experiences that enhance civic participation and the promotion of democratic values in students. They are implemented in the classroom to successfully train democratic citizens. Democracy is more than just a way of doing things. Basically, it's a way of living in a community and talking to people about your experiences. The classroom is the most important shared, communicative experience of connected life; the family comes in second. Since democracy is taught in schools as well as at home, it is everyone's responsibility to give students the knowledge they need to participate in a democratic society. Dewey (1916) asserted that educating people about democracy is a value that many different groups share and that educators have a critical role to play in helping citizens become more democratic.

Educators who are prepared to teach should use democratic ideals such as helping students develop critical thinking abilities, a sense of efficacy, a commitment to compassionate action, and a desire to actively participate in local decision-making processes in order to prepare them to be full and active members of society. These fundamental ideas highlight the critical link between human experiences that promote civic engagement and the development of democratic values in students. These ideas are used in the classroom to successfully prepare democratic citizens.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teachers of social studies play a critical role in educating pupils for citizenship in a democratic society. The importance of schools in fostering and advancing democracy in society was discussed by Dinkelman (1999). Additionally, he highlighted the role that educators have in fostering democratic citizens: A recurring subject in educational and social theory has been the connection between democracy and public education. The obligation to prepare the youth of the country for their duty as citizens in a democratic society has possibly had the longest-lasting rhetorical appeal of any of the various mandates placed before schools in this nation. Public education's importance in promoting democracy has been a topic of debate. The main purpose of education, however, has been to prepare pupils for the world. The emphasis on educating young people to be democratic citizens gives rise to the idea of democratic inheritance in schooling.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was significant for grade 9–12 educators in producing responsible citizens for a democratic society. However, different people defined democracy in accordance with various conditions. As a result, knowing how instructors view democracy will help them in their efforts to help students become prosperous, democratic citizens. Professional and in-service teachers might position themselves to be a democratising force by comprehending their own views on democracy and how concepts about democratic citizenship have changed. Additionally, they will be better able to examine their theoretical claims, reflect more on their own teaching and internalise the steps involved in learning to deal with differences. They would also become more conscious of their own need for accountability and teamwork, which they would then be able to enforce, encourage and call on students to be active participants both inside and outside of the classroom. The Study underscores the necessity for collaborative efforts among educators, teachers, and policymakers to refine instructional practices, integrate experiential learning opportunities, and

enhance the social studies curriculum to foster heightened student engagement with democratic principles. The study offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of social studies students and their interactions with teachers, shedding light on areas for improvement within the realm of democratic citizenship education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Understanding how teachers include students in the development of information is key to learning. According to Grey (1997). A method of comprehending the contingent nature of knowledge in order to prompt more critical thought on diverse educational institutions and practices. In this respect, constructivism's theories continue to be a workable method for educating students about democratic society's norms and practise. Knowledge is formed and reconstructed depending on prior experiences and comprehension, according to Dewey (1916) and Piaget (1977). It is an ongoing process that improves over time. Thus, a knowledge of how teachers conceptualised democracy, formed concepts about democratic citizenship and incorporated these ideas and experiences into teaching supports the constructivist theoretical framework.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the Social Studies' Lived Experiences Teachers for Developing Democratic Citizenship Ideas and Teaching
2. To evaluate Social Studies' Lived Experiences of Teachers developing student ideas on democratic citizenship.
3. To investigate the real-world difficulties and opportunities that social studies instructors face when attempting to teach democratic citizenship.
4. To Identify the factors that influence social studies teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and values related to democratic citizenship education.

### **Research Questions**

1. The following questions were the focus of this study:
2. How do teachers who teach 9-12 grades social studies conceptualise the meaning of
3. democracy?
4. How do they develop ideas and concepts regarding democratic citizenship education?
5. In what ways do they implement their perspectives and experiences into teaching and nurturing students into becoming thriving democratic citizens?

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has some restrictions. The study is only limited to the schools of tehsil Rawalpindi. The portrayal of a modest population size was the first constraint. The study's findings will not be generalisable due to the study's limited sample size. A greater sample size can result in different findings. As a result, the findings of this study could not accurately reflect the phenomenon as a whole. The second restriction concerned the follow-up. Due to the hectic academic year, follow-ups could not be done. Each participant was occupied with getting their kids ready for the 12 upcoming assessments. Since standardised tests were being conducted, the participants were not available. The results of the study may not be generalisable because they are of a primitive nature.

### **THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This survey of the literature includes information on the historical background of social studies, definitions, objectives, and the field's relationship to democracy and democratic citizenship. The purpose of social studies education is to prepare people by fostering the knowledge and moral principles needed for civic.

As a result, the connections between social studies, citizenship education, and democracy show us how important they are to democratic education and how capable citizens are of carrying out their civic duties. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend how social studies teachers view democracy, the evolution of ideas and the integration of their views and experiences into their teaching methods. It is believed that democratic education produces highly capable, active citizens. Democratic education aims to prepare students who are committed to the ideas and values of democracy to use their knowledge within their communities, countries, and the world. engagement (Ali et al., 2005).

The goal of democratic education is to develop good citizens who are engaged in social activities and are willing to work for the common good of all. Similar to this, it emphasised that social studies education should aim to improve people's lives as widely as feasible. Additionally, Ajiboye (2009) described social studies as citizenship education, imparting to pupils the knowledge, abilities, beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes that are traits of good citizens. The area of social studies has continually used civic participation, democratic principles, and knowledge for citizenship education, positioning democracy in the objectives of social studies education:

### **Historical Background of Social Studies Education**

Saxe (1991) pointed out that the 1820s saw the conceptual birth of social studies education in Great Britain, which aimed to enhance social welfare. The United States quickly adopted the promotion of social welfare through social studies education, as Saxe (1991) states. The fundamental concepts of social studies. The original goal of education was to use it to enhance social welfare. The purpose of social studies education was to safeguard individuals against all forms of exploitation. The main objectives of the topic were to solve social issues, educate the populace, and protect citizens from socio-political exploitation in the country's industrial environment. Saxe (1991) also outlined additional justifications for the adoption of social studies education. Following the Civil War and the sudden influx of immigrants into the United States, social reconstruction began. These two elements influenced the development of social studies as an important discipline. Scholars of social studies have emphasised the need to include any content that focuses on social utility and helps students better grasp today's social issues.

### **An institutional strategy for teaching social studies**

According to Warring and Bradshaw (2014), "teaching for democracy" is a phrase frequently used in the literature on American education and is frequently taken for granted in a nation founded on democratic ideals. The debate prompted educators who are committed to studying and implementing theories about teaching democracy into practice to examine what democracy really entails. Teaching for democracy necessitates a deeper understanding of democratic ideals because understanding a democracy depends heavily on experiences. Thapa (2016) stressed the significance of emphasising the development of human values and life experiences while considering how social studies educators should approach teaching for democracy. They observed that many individuals would regard values acquired via experiences as things to be hammered out on the anvil of all of humankind's experiences rather than things to be passed down or justified. The matured and tallied experiences were the values learnt via experience.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Using the phenomenological approach of qualitative research methodology. I looked into the actual lives of social studies teachers in Govt higher secondary schools of tehsil Rawalpindi, Who taught grades 9 to 12. I chose this methodology because I was interested in recording how a person or a group of people interprets an event they encounter through their lived experiences. The sections that follow provide descriptions of the methodological approaches that were used in this inquiry.

In the first part of this chapter, I provide a general explanation for qualitative research investigation. Section 2 emphasises the phenomenological methodology that was used in the investigation. The

recruitment procedures, including sample size, participant access, and participant selection criteria, are described in the third section. The data collection process is described simply in the section.

### **Research Approach**

The study looked at a phenomenon that participants had in common with regard to their conception of democracy and the formation of their views about democratic citizenship. Van Manen (1990) defined phenomenology as the portrayal of the lived-through character of events. The term used is phenomenology. On the one hand, there is the direct depiction of life, and on the other, there is the mediated, symbolically stated account of the life world. They continued by saying that those who have encountered a phenomenon can share their impressions with others and, as a result, respond to inquiries on its significance from others who have not. According to Rossman (2006) and Creswell (2007), the phenomenological approach is one of the most effective ways to understand an individual's or a group's lived experiences in order to fully comprehend the phenomena and to articulate participants' individual narratives, additionally, in accordance with Patton's (2000) description of phenomenology.

### **Research Design**

The investigation has employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative inquiry works best when researching phenomena that haven't been previously described. According to Glesne (2006), qualitative research has extensively discussed the value of using qualitative research methods as the best tool for comprehending social phenomena from a variety of participants' points of view in order to improve the social environment. The research topic deals with the phenomena of social studies teachers.

### **Population**

The study population was based on 528 students and 50 teachers of the Govt higher secondary schools of Tehsil Rawalpindi who are teaching the social studies subject in their respective institutions.

Table 1. Population of the study.

Sr. No	Population (Students)	n
1	Male	178
2	Female	350
	Total	528

Table 1 explains the number of students enrolled at Govt higher secondary schools of tehsil Rawalpindi, which is a total 528 (Male students are = 178 and Female students are = 350).

Table 2. Population of the study teachers.

Sr. No	Population (Teachers)	n
1	Male	25
2	Female	25
	Total	50

Table 2 explains the number of teachers teaching social studies subjects at Govt higher secondary schools of tehsil Rawalpindi that is total of 50 (Male teachers are = 25 and Female teachers are = 25).

### **Sampling Technique**

The sample of the study was selected by using a purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose the participants. The purposive sampling looked specifically for participants who shared their viewpoints. Participants indicated an interest in citizens of democracies. Therefore, selecting individuals with comparable interests was undoubtedly helpful in gathering rich data, but it did not help in gaining insight into the perspectives of the possible participants outside of this constraint. 10% of the population was selected as a sample for conducting the research that consisted of 52 students. All 52 students were given the interview questions, and the interview was recorded.

### **Data Collection Tool**

The interviews were semi-structured in order to gather the data. These interviews were informal; the researcher may ask the participant to give in-depth answers and share his/her experiences regarding questions and add real-life examples as well. The research was the dialogue with the respondents and created further questions from one question.

Data was collected using the purposeful sampling method. An intentional sampling, as defined by Painkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood (as referenced in Creswell & Clark, 2011), is useful for identifying individuals or a group of participants who have particular expertise in and familiarity with a phenomenon of interests. Therefore, in order to gather data for my study, I utilised purposeful sampling.

In the data collection process, building trust is vital. Glesne (2006) stated that building a rapport with a subject is a distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, and trust-building method that, at its core, promotes the researcher's interests. Despite the participants' criticism of the research ethics, I kept their trust.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological model was used to analyse the data. This includes literary description and analysis, as well as phenomenological reduction. I applied the phenomenological reduction method to manage a large chunk of raw data. I used the phenomenological data reduction process developed by Moustakas. Merriam (1988) explained a method of how a large chunk of data is sorted into manageable data and themes are identified. In addition, identifying the keywords and themes from a large chunk of data is a difficult process. A large chunk of data was managed for analysis. I reduced a large chunk of data into smaller units to easily understand the phenomena of participants' experiences and identify patterns of themes.

### **Discussion of the Themes**

Discussions of topics are divided into three main categories, such as how democracy is conceptualised, how democratic citizenship concepts grow, and how to incorporate ideas and experiences to enhance classroom instruction.

The following three research questions were the primary focus of the study:

1. How do teachers who teach 9-12 grades social studies conceptualise the meaning of democracy?
2. How do they develop ideas and concepts regarding democratic citizenship education?
3. In what ways do they implement their perspectives and experiences into teaching and nurturing students into becoming thriving democratic citizens?

The data was collected through Semi-structured interviews and analysed. The data was collected purposively from teachers. All the participants were the students of grades 9-12 and the teachers teaching social studies to these students. They were asked about teaching social studies lived experiences for developing democratic citizenship in students.

Table 3. Themes generated from semi-structured interview.

Construct	Major Themes	Sub-themes
Teachers teaching social studies building concepts of democratic citizenship and education	how democracy is conceptualised	Lack of basic subject knowledge conception of democracy Required pre-planned activities Lack of understandings Lack of scope of students' knowledge and coverage of subject matter
	how democratic citizenship concepts grow	Lack of proper attention Less provision of the proper concept Inadequate knowledge support inadequate development of citizenship lack of education Lack of patriotic development
	how to incorporate ideas and experiences to enhance classroom instruction.	Basic knowledge of classroom instruction Development of basic social skills Lack of incorporated ideas and experiences Indifferent students in learning Students' engagements

**Findings**

The findings of the study focused on the participants' conception of democracy and the development of ideas about democratic citizenship. When describing the conception of democracy, the majority of participants provided their perceptions and understanding of the fundamental principles of democracy and stressed the purpose of the general welfare of the people. In other words, focus on the 528 participants about having the conception of democracy ideas developing about democratic citizenship and the teaching practices seemed primarily embedded with their own experiences and standardised tests oriented. Lori Childers Wood expressed having limited time to cover content rather than going in depth over content about democracy. Besides covering the contents and preparing students for tests, participants expressed their challenges in teaching. One of the big challenges was the indifferent of students in learning and critically engaged in the learning process. The participants focused on the importance of enhancing instructional practices. Those emphases on the instructional practices as given examples were the ways of looking at wider perspectives of ideas, thinking outside of the box using direct instruction, integrating technology, having mastery over the subject matter, understanding bigger ideas of democracy, and utilising available resources in the proper manner, etc. The participants anticipated that enabling young people to participate fully in civic life would be possible through teaching (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2006). Although participants highlighted various characteristics of democracy, some expressed negative perceptions of democracy without offering an alternative system.

The conception of democracy was perceived as a complex body and a system for establishing rules, values, and individuals' decision-making regarding their own fate. The participants were also engaged in sharing their experiences as citizens and as professional teachers. Those two mindsets of the participants seemed very useful in recapping experiences and engaging in discourse during the interviews. The skills that all the

participants demonstrated were critically engaged in finding the answer from the perspectives of a teacher first and from a general standpoint of citizens.

In addition, I also observed the participants having two mindsets at the time of expressing their views and experiences as well.

One aspect of the mindset was that the participants engaged in answering the researcher in a casual conversation, and on the other hand, they were processing information in a professional manner. The participants' views on democracy described that democracy is a set of abstract principles, and it is the perception of individuals that they can achieve experience accordingly. The participating teachers conceptualised democracy and democratic citizenship as personal identity, active participation, collective responsibility self-reliance, and fortune for making decisions for their better lives. The findings presented have also shown that the participating teachers' lived experiences and the acquisition of democratic ideas are to be developed involved in community involvement, and influenced by their parents.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study's conclusion was drawn on the basis of findings which centred on participants' perceptions of democracy and the evolution of concepts about democratic citizenship. This study reveals the need for educators, teachers, and policymakers to collaborate to develop instructional practices, incorporate experiential learning experiences, and improve social studies curricula to promote student engagement.

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