



Exploring Pre Service Teachers Perception about Social Justice

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Abstract-

“Man is born free but is in chains everywhere”

Jean Jacques Rousseau

The above quote of Rousseau has been immortalized since immemorial times through which he clearly asserts that human being is born free without any biases of caste, creed, gender, race, class but through the passage of time the society in which he/she lives binds him/her in the tight fetters of discrimination, burden and deprivation. The system in which Man lives curtails his/her freedom, hence such a system should be created where man would evolve into a finer human being and enjoy the freedom with which he/she has been born, this can happen through exercising just and humane conditions for living where humans can make individual choices and take informed decisions and enjoy life. However it is equally important to understand that one cannot enjoy life at the expense of others. One has to understand that distribution of resources is not the only factor which can pave the way for social justice along with that democratic and participative decision making and individual and social recognition plays an important role. The misrecognition of minorities and oppressed classes in the social and political realm has caused a lot of damage. The key element to foster justice is to identify injustice evident in the society and thereby find solutions to the existing inequalities. Inclusion of social justice elements in education and fostering a common culture without disrespecting the cultural differences and fostering the common understanding of racial, ethnic differences and existing racial hierarchy, understanding the dominance of majority and then establishing a common path for respecting the rights of all including minorities are the common contemporary challenges which have existed since the establishment of the common school system. And to cater to these challenges efficiently we need teachers with strong social justice orientation who would be intelligent, rational and humane in their approach while dealing with the students and the content in their

hand. With this intent in mind the present study ventures in investigating pre-service teachers' perception about social justice. The study is conducted during the internship period of pre-service teachers where they have to practice teaching in schools and Junior colleges as per the virtue of their qualifications.

Key words: Justice, Social Justice, Equality, Equity, Perception

Concept of Social Justice Education:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

Nelson Mandela.

The above quote of Nelson Mandela is even relevant in the present context. India is celebrating 75 years of Independence but till date there exist a section of population which believes in fake ideology of discrimination. In order to free the country from the fetters of caste, gender, class differences and increase tolerance and brotherhood we need to turn to education. Major educationists from Dewey to Gandhi and from Dr. Ambedkar to Dr. D.S. Kothari have already suggested ‘that a revolutionary change in the society can be possible only through revolutionary education’, which would be based on the principles of inclusion and equality, and would be transacted in the classrooms through pedagogical and curriculum practices.

Review of Related Literature

A classroom is said to be just when all students in it have equal footing, where no one is left out on the grounds of race, colour, sex, caste, class or place of residence, where everyone is respected, and given equal opportunities. In view of above lines Shelton. S (2017) uses Shakespeare's famous play “The Merchant of Venice” to bring in the matters of religious oppression, gender norms, gender performance and socio economic class differences. She uses narrative reflection on text to capture students' views on Islamophobia, homophobia, racism and sexism. In another research a meta-analytical study was carried out by Altinkurt, Yahya; Yilmaz, Kursad; Karaman, Gizem, (2015) to find the effect of gender, seniority and subject matter on the Perceptions of Organizational Justice of Teachers: The research was conducted on thesis and research studies in organizational justice published in Turkey from 2005 to 2012 and found that perceptions of teachers plays a major role in maintaining justice in the organization.

Allen Albritton. S, Huffman. S, McClellan. R, (2017) measured the perceptions of School leaders who mistakenly identified social justice in terms of instructional leadership as practices of social justice was overshadowed by instructional leadership. They perceived that to be socially just is to focus on curricular topics and prepare for students' success and to focus more on students who were weak in studies.

It is very important to have the right perception by the university students who already have an experience of real world service or are on the verge of it. Jefferson. R .E., Grant, C.E., Rye, L., Bassette. L.A., Stuve. M., Heneisen, R (2018) conducted a mixed method study to find the impact of service learning university course on the awareness of social justice between the students, teachers and people with disability. The findings proved that research helped in elevating the understanding of university students' value system and attitude towards diversity in the post and during camp surveys as compared to the survey before the service learning started.

Kathmandubya Panthi, R.K, Luitel, B.C, Belbase, S (2018). Teachers Perception of Social Justice in Mathematics Classrooms (India). conducted research in Mathematics classroom they believed that mathematics teaching should shift from the old traditional standard of teaching mathematics which is focused on just structural and procedural knowledge to more meaningful and relevant teaching by incorporating innovative classroom activities; that focus on equity, fairness, and social justice.

Today's educators need to have strong social justice orientation they require skills in managing group dynamics, communication and empathy, an awareness of oneself and historical social concerns and contemporary social issues and in knowing how to apply the understanding of social justice education to optimize classroom learning. For this the researcher tries to understand the pre- service teachers' perception of social justice through qualitative methodology.

Variable of the Study:

Perception about Social Justice

Operational Definition:

Perception about Social Justice:

Student teachers' perception about social justice refers to the extent of the knowledge and understanding of essential rights for dignified living such as equality and equity and its role in their lives as well as of others in order to foster justice in the society.

Research Questions-

- 1) What is the meaning of Social Justice according to student teachers?
- 2) How do they construct their meaning of social justice?
- 3) What I their role in fostering social justice environment in the classrooms?

Methodology:

For the present study qualitative methodology is used as the major focus is on capturing the students' present level perception about social justice in all its complexities by not providing any information related to social justice, not advocating, advancing personal opinions and views. The data is collected through interviews and therefore to transcribe such a data qualitative methodology is employed.

Sample and sampling method- For this study convenient sampling method was used where in 14 pre-service teachers from different pedagogical methods were selected from S.Y. B. Ed program of a teacher education institute from Greater Mumbai Area .

The participants for the present study were student teachers interning in different schools around the Greater Mumbai area ranging from aided schools to International schools. Out of 14, N=10, student teachers were interning in international school, n=3 from State Board Minority School and n=1 from aided State Board School.

Table 1- Discipline wise Sample size:-

Disciplines	Sample size
Economics	2
History	3
English	4
Science	2
Math	3

Tool:

- Semi structured Interview tool
- Audio data through phone recorder

Data Collection: The researcher sought the consent of the pre-service teachers to participate in the study voluntarily. It was assured to the participants that the data from them would be strictly used for research purposes and would not be disclosed elsewhere under any circumstances. The data was collected during the Internship period.

Data Analysis: Data Analysis involved various levels. Level1- students were interviewed and the interviews were audio recorded. Level-2, the audios were transcribed verbatim including the expressions and pauses. Level 3- Transcripts were rechecked by listening to the audio to avoid anything to be missed. Level 4- After studying all the transcripts codes were generated. The codes were generated manually to check how participants perceived the meaning of social justice and alternative explanation was generated. The analysis of the data gave rise to three themes which were aligned to the research questions. "Meaning of Social justice", "Common belief built from social and cultural difference", "Strategies to foster Social justice environment through classrooms."

Analysis of the Theme- *The detail analysis of the themes was presented in the preceding paragraphs:*

Theme 1- Meaning of Social justice: It was the most dominant theme found in the study. The interviews directs towards the inadequate understanding of the social justice of the student teachers which needs to be rectified if we need to see social justice in true sense in the society. Because classrooms are the fertile ground for seeds to germinate into huge trees bearing the fruits of social justice that provide peaceful shelter of harmony.

Following are the words through which the Theme emerged:

Table 2: Codes emerging through theme-1 Meaning of Social Justice-

Equality	Equal status
Equal share of resources, services or goods	Equal opportunities
Equal rights	Just and fair treatment
Right to equality	No discrimination on the basis of class, color, gender and caste

The dominant word for this theme is Equality where 98.57% of students have given it. The student teachers dominantly points out social justice as equality and while interpreting they have reinstated that it is something which needs to be given.

Here the participants have stated that **'social justice is not very justly practiced hence it should be given'**

Discussion:

In the above examples students have not gone beyond equality concept. Here they fail to understand that social justice cannot be fostered by just giving equal opportunities or goods, for it equity is needed i.e., giving that much to the impoverished and underprivileged to bring them to the status of the common people.

Another example given by the participant is as follows:

"We say, we have things that are there but still it's not been seen and properly...i...i don't think that in our society it is still accepted..."

Discussion- In the above transcript also participant is stating that social justice is something which should be given without realizing that it is the right of the needy.

Another word which 97.50% of students have pointed out for this theme is **no discrimination** on the grounds of class, caste, race and color. This line is added just as a passing reference by almost all the

participants after giving equality as the meaning of social justice. They hardly have any clue of how to foster this understanding among the students. Their knowledge regarding the meaning of social justice is very limited and basic.

2) Theme 2- Common belief built from social and cultural differences

Table 3- Codes related to theme 2- common belief built from social and cultural differences:

Laid back attitude	OBC category
Set mindset	Not willing to be friend
Dalits	Admission through OBC category
Still it's not been seen properly	I allowed your mother
Don't instigate	Biased towards their own religion
Don't bring any community in picture	Particularly pick on them
Economically affluent class	Struggling

Interpretation: From the table consisting of above words and phrases following sub themes evolved:

- Views on Backward Community
- Gender differences through curriculum
- Views emerging through social differences (social and systemic differences)

A. Views on Backward Community:

In a vertically layered Indian society only 20% to 25% of population belongs to upper or the privileged section and the remaining 75% to 80% of the population belongs to the depressed section i.e., schedule caste, schedule tribe and other backward communities. Yet everyone here would like themselves to be called as upper castes because this is the class which controls the major resources, goods and services. The example to it is as follows where the participant states

"Ma'am frankly talking(very happily) I come from a very privileged family as I grew up I started to realize that there are various differences and I am very lucky that I don't have to go through that the other people are going through. And I think after coming to B.Ed (pause) you get to interact with lot of students from different backgrounds that first I was unable to as I come from economically affluent class."

Discussion- The student teacher very happily, heaving a sigh of relief spoke that she comes from a very privileged family and in her childhood till the completion of her graduation she never witnessed any such cases. It is only after seeking admission to B.Ed and after becoming a tuition teacher she realized that people also hail from households where they face adversity of resources. Here the student has come up with a very valid point that the society is divided into two halves where there are haves and have-nots.. And the people feel happy to be from the upper class that mostly does not face the scarcity of resources as compared to the backward community where most of the people are impoverished and destitute. They are so impoverished that they do not even have enough resources to meet their basic needs i.e., food, clothing, shelter and education. But the haves in their merry life do not even see around or observe the have-nots who constitute the major section of the nation's population.

Another example of which also depicts the dominant ideology of the society can be evident by one of the participants' answers, where she expresses her views on the backward community. In the attempts to hide her narrow mindedness about the backward community, it gets revealed through her conversation on the topic. she comments:

"in History that Dalit's were treated like this like that, we are just giving them information but after that we are not telling them that in today's day it doesn't happen, so when students are reading they only have that time ka information that they were treated like that.."

Discussion-

Despite of the cases of atrocities being circulated over the social media and news channels day in and day out still *she formulates such opinion and vouches for stating that Dalits are no more ill-treated and therefore teacher needs to say that such things are not happening nowadays*. Such are the people who are not concerned about the impoverished life of Dalits, who no matter how much ever gets educated or how much ever be rich, to the upper-caste, a Dalit is a Dalit, who is born as a Dalit and dies as a Dalit. Apart from that he/she has no identity of his/her own. Apart from his/her caste. The examples is a case of atrocity on the underprivileged section of society. Just recently it was in news that Dr. Tadvī a Gynecologist practicing in AIMS hospital was tortured for being from schedule tribe caste because of which she committed suicide. Another incident where Gujrat Minister wanted to search his daughter and Son in Law and kill them both as the daughter married a man who belonged to Schedule caste despite of being economically well off.

May be one of the reason for her views might be the reservation policy because immediately after she made such a comment when the interviewer asked her as to what made her to conclude that such things have stopped today. Over that she said and to some extent also changed her stance by saying:

“I mean it happens because even in colleges when someone knows that they are from OBC category then they are not willing to be friends with them and that’s what I have seen. And there are so many people that they hide the fact that I got admission through OBC category. I had friends of mine which we had no clue that they were from OBC category and all of that”.

Discussion-

Here spills the common belief and the mentality of the people which reflects their narrow thinking. By stating that some OBC people hide their identity and do not reveal the fact that they got admission from OBC quota. Here she might as well wants to assert that these backward people have no caliber but because of reservation they are getting admission. Here the student teacher like many others is not aware that despite of putting reservation scheme for the underprivileged in the constitution. The underprivileged were not able to avail it till 1960 the state took the decision to introduce relaxation of marks for this community to bring them at par with the common people and then giving them grounds to compete with their better well off. This measure is called equity or social justice measure in education. But till date it is envied and looked down as a hurdle in the path of the upper-castes educational endeavors.

B. Gender differences

While talking about social justice one participant pointed out gender differences in society creeping through school textbooks-

“There was a chapter in 8th grade that I was reading which was equality between men and women, the name itself was men and women are created equally. The chapter begins with a mother telling her daughter that I am a lawyer and I do this and that and everything and the next day she talks with her father and the father says yes I am a broad minded person and I allowed your mother to work. So I think that is, I mean we would just generally take in.. yaa exactly I mean, in the chapter that says Men and women are equal, you are just telling that you are allowing, that’s what I saw, that what I realized and it really pricked, because I was going to take that chapter that’s not the chapter but then I said that that’s not the chapter I am going to teach them...that word allowed is written in the textbook. So I think that happens. I feel partially that there are not much things related to social justice, women get inferior opportunities. So this shouldn’t happen and we generally see that aa in the companies..the bosses are the men but not women.. this shouldn’t happen because women are also capable.. especially women are multitalented... because they do their work according to their time management so they can be better managers of the company”

Discussion:

Here the student had commented on the male dominant society where women are still seen incapable of being a boss or head of the company or institution. The student teacher further adds that according to her women are multitalented as they manage their work at home and then according to Time also manage the work at job so they can be the best managers. The above lines indicate that student is sharp enough to catch gender discrimination from the textbook this can be because she too is a woman and might have experienced such things in her life or might have seen happening with her family or neighborhood women.

Ex- Parents discriminate among their children unknowingly by so many things like, blue colour is for boys and pink colour is for girls...and parents say that girls should play with dolls like (pause) “ghar ghar khelo” and boys should play cricket or football that type of and that shouldn’t happen if girls like to play football fine there shouldn’t be discrimination ..it starts from the house itself ..”

Discussion:

The above lines show that the discrimination starts right from the child’s birth and the people who do are child’s own family members. For example the colour of clothes the girls and boys would wear that too are fixed- pink for girls and blue for boys. So also the toys ex- cars and vehicles for boys and dolls for girls. Also the kind of games that the girls and boys should play those are also predefined by parents and community like cricket for boys and ghar-ghar for girls. Apart from this a very common saying which we often hear in the family is “don’t cry like a girl”. All of these things indicate that female child is delicate and weak and male child is embodiment of strength and all this starts from family itself and this is how it enters into the head of children and when they become adults they too continue with the same thing. It’s like a vicious cycle keeps repeating itself which in real sense is the cause of male chauvinism. Also in most of the domestic violence cases where females are ill-treated at the hands of husbands and his family members but still women are expected to be in their family, not to abandon them and continue with her household responsibilities without a word of complain.

C. Views emerging through social differences:

One of the student teacher narrated an incident of discrimination that occurred in her internship school,

I overheard the two students in an annual function commenting on the speech of another student’s.., it was in Kachhi. So they were laughing aare ye to Kachhi mein hain. So Gujrati mein bhi they have you know they treat that Kachhi waale low.

Discussion-

Here the pre-service teacher has depicted how children too are aware of discrimination despite of the fact that the school being Gujrati Minority so only Gujrati students are admitted in the school then too the children are discriminating and despising the speech as it was in Kachhi. This depicts that from childhood itself such thing goes in their head, it may be due to purposeful teaching of family members about the different castes and how they have to abstain and not befriend with such lower community. Or such things may be happening in the surrounding may be at home- when parents or other family members converse with maids or other servants, in the neighborhood or at school – may be they would have heard or seen teachers conversing or treating the aayas and peons at school. May be this kind of non formal education is shaping students attitude and personality in dealing with such situations.

Another student pointed out a racial discrimination incident at school-

“...even in schools people discriminate on the basis of caste religion and color that shouldn't happen because we should inculcate values in students... I observed a child a boy, he discriminated a girl on the basis of color. So he said that she is black”

Discussion-

Here the student teacher points at the flaw in the system which is incapable to protect children from discrimination at school. The student asserts her point by stating that she heard a boy discriminating girl on the basis of color by calling her black.

In yet another comment another student teacher asserts

“There should not be any gender differences or caste or religion differences.”

Discussion- Though the student has come up with the right point but it was put just as a passing reference no proper thought behind it.

Another participant asserts -**“somebody who is rich is treated nicely and somebody was not as much as rich as that person is treated badly is not treated equally that shouldn't be that if that is inculcated then it is called that the society is just and fair and Social Justice is been inculcated in the society”**

Social justice in above lines as quoted by the participant is to provide just and fair treatment, it should not be on the basis of class where rich to be treated with respect and dignity and the poor to be ill-treated.

Thoughts on Govt. school and its employees-

“I think the teachers in the govt. aided schools are not being held accountable enough for whatever they are doing in the classrooms. . They have a very laid back attitude with the teachers themselves are not serious, they have a very set mindset, they don't want to work on them basically they are very happy cause of the fact that their salaries start with the 7th pay commission...”

Discussion:

The above belief of the student is stated in **Systemic context** wherein the student is depicting the flaws in Government schools; as she happens to do her internship in a government aided school; she has got the opportunity to see the work of the government school teachers. Which she states have got laid back attitude as they are getting paid as per the 7th pay commission. Here the student has also given work load of the teacher that is just 3 hrs which is just one and a half hour of teaching. Fortunately she agrees that they have other duties like correction and paper work but still adamant on her views of laid back attitude. She also points out the hierarchy of the teachers like maths, science and then the language teachers and then arts would come. This is the most common view that is witnessed in the society where government teachers are always looked down tagging them as insufficient, in competent and dishonest towards their profession. These govt. teachers are envied for the salaries they draw. But in all this blame game it is forgotten that these are the same government teachers who are transferred to any point of time, anywhere in the state or country, they are the same teachers to whom the government deploys for decennial census and election duties which none of other teachers in non government schools do nor does people from any other profession is deployed. It is only these teachers. The student teacher here has rightly commented that ‘teaching comes first’ and therefore government has to assign some other people for jobs unrelated to teaching profession so that government teachers will get more time to focus on teaching.

- **Theme 3- Strategies to foster Social justice environment in the classroom:**

Table 4- Strategies given by Student Teachers to foster Social Justice Understanding in the classroom

Disciplines	Classroom strategies	Content	Student Teachers
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Play • Dramatization • Teacher written script for the students to perform with emotions • Divide the work equally • Show scenes of injustice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reservation system • Life of Tribals 	N=2 14.28
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Studies • Videos • Their role in maintaining social justice • Scenarios • Facts • Students role in promoting the value of social justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary, Secodary, Tertiary sector • Unemployment 	N=3 21.42%
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation by counseling • Age appropriate talk • Not including sentences in grammar which are gender biased or community or religion biased • Dramatization • Videos • Review of Books • Songs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey to Jo Berg • Grammar • By including Core-element in the lesson 	N=4 28.57%
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar graphs • Multiple Bar graphs • Word problems relating to transgender achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar graphs • Multiple Bar graphs • Word problems 	N=3 21.42%
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While teaching Body parts will say all parts are equal so everyone should be treated equally • While teaching pollution will say not only give safe environment to high class but even to low class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body parts • Pollution 	N=2 14.28%

The above table depicts discipline wise classroom strategies that the student teachers would employ in particular lessons along with the no. of teachers for each discipline.

From the table it is evident that students have little understanding of how to impart social justice understanding among the students. But when the question on how it can be implemented they fall short in describing it. Also another note worthy point here is students are confining social justice element only to particular content and not to all classroom teaching learning situations. The Mathematics and science student teachers were not able to justify how they would foster social justice environment in their classrooms. Upon questioning what kind of resources they would use in fostering SJ understanding they said through pictures, videos, researches but couldn't explain the *how part of it*.

Ex- Interviewer- what kind of teaching aids you would use to impart this education?

I can show some video...or... Interviewer- videos on?

Videos on some researches.. Interviewer- What else?

St-teacher- no reply.

Findings of the study reflect that:

- Student teachers understanding of Social Justice concept need to be more in-depth they have hardly gone beyond equality. In making meaning of the concept they have devoid equality of equity in such case there is no equality at all.
- Some of the pre-service teachers have been the upholder of the narrow ideologies for example one of them asserts that **“despite the student belonged to OBC caste we accepted her in our group”** such kind of statements depicts the pre-service teachers state of mind and if such teachers are teaching the youth then the future will be in dark. Further stating that reservation should be stopped as there is no caste discrimination happening in present times. Their perception of social justice is flawed, they first need to be updated with the current scenario of the country, where now and then there are news of educated and uneducated people committing suicide or getting murdered due to caste discrimination to name a few- Payal Tadvi suicide case, Rohit Vemula, Kharlenji etc.
- The same student has identified the bias in curriculum on gender discrimination. Here it shows that the as she is a female she is able to understand the pain of gender discrimination but when it is coming to caste she is unable to depict it may be because she belongs to privileged section of the society and hardly have faced any incidents or like other people she has perceived caste discrimination issues as normal in society and therefore to be rejected or deny to have happening.
- In order to foster Social Justice understanding in the society it is important for student teachers to have content mastery they need to relate the content to the historical context. Only factual information reproduces the dominant and hegemonic ideologies here the content should be represented with range of ideas and information that goes beyond those usually presented in the mainstream media. Not just facts but in classrooms the teachers should allow students to have a dialogue on the topics as in social justice education it is important to involve students in the process thereby making them realize their responsibility, but for this teacher herself should be well versed with the different connects of the content and give students critical understanding of the same otherwise students might end up continuing the wrong understanding.
For example-science student teacher while giving strategies is just talking about body parts and pollution like topics as if they are just happening without any references to its sources, relations and preventive measures that the government can take to stop it. Here the student teacher could have focused on gathering the critical information on the areas where lot of pollution is caused. Which state in India is the worst affected by it? Who are the people living near garbage dumping grounds? How can anyone stay in such disease prone areas? Why is government not helping them? How many people die of low to no medical facilities? How many people on an average die due to pollution in the country? How many die due to it in the entire world? and who are these people belonging o which strata of the society? If teachers start thinking on these grounds then in true sense they can foster social justice environment in their classrooms

Conclusion:

The above discussion shows that pre-service teachers are not thoroughly aware of how to foster social justice through education. In the present paper researcher has tried to understand the present level understanding of social justice of the pre-service teachers further researches can be conducted by devising a social justice program and then to check whether that has helped in bringing a positive change in the narrow outlook of the pre-service teachers perception about social justice.

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Appendix

Table 1: School wise participants list:

Schools	Participants
International School Datta Meghe World Academy, Airoli CBSE Board Status- Private	10
SVDD, Ghatkopar (E) State Board Status- Minority School	3
Saraswati Vidya Mandir, (aided) Matunga State Board Status- Government Aided School	1