Understanding Teachers' Roles in Classroom Diversity Management: Evidence from Federal Government Schools in Pakistan

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Abstract
This study explores the perceptions of teachers regarding the diversity of a classroom and the inclusionary measures utilized in teaching in context of the Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) in Kohat, Pakistan. There is diversity of culture, language, and even socio-economic status in a country like Pakistan and, thus, globally, as classroom diversity increases, there is an expectation that teachers will be able to manage multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-ability heterogeneous classes. While there are policies that advocate for inclusive education, what actually happens in the classrooms is more complicated and primarily hinges on the teachers' understanding, beliefs, and approaches towards teaching. In order to understand how FGEI teachers perceive their responsibilities regarding the management of diversity, there is need to conduct a comprehensive study utilizing a mixed methods approach, which is what this study implements. Quantitative data was gathered from a structured questionnaire administered to 37 teachers while qualitative data was obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 3 teachers. Quantitative analysis conducted through SPSS showed that to a large extent, 94.6% of teachers believed that diversity management is an integral part of education, however, 49% claimed to not have sufficient training, especially novice teachers. More than half, 55.4%, of teachers with 1-9 years of experience reported having great difficulty in formulating techniques which would help accommodate the diversity among learners, while the more experienced teachers, ten years or more, showed more adaptability and confidence in their teaching. Thematic analysis of the interviews reaffirmed these findings, reflecting the patterns of inclusionary purpose, self-service reliance, minimal institutional assistance, and an emerging yet constricted understanding of diversity that is predominantly linguistic and cultural. It is clear that teachers, to some extent, are willing and able; however, lack of professional development or policy guidance stifles their ability to work on these systemic issues productively. The study then stressed the need for stronger pre-service and in-service training, the addition of responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) and developed institutional frameworks that support inclusivity through guided educational objectives. This

research adds to the discussion on inclusiveness within poorly researched federal educational systems and provides blueprints for educational change in Pakistan.

Keywords: classroom diversity, inclusive education, teacher perception, FGEIs, Pakistan, culturally responsive teaching, teacher preparedness

Introduction

In the modern world, the educational setting mirrors the complexities of society since marks have become multidimensional units that carry milestones or cores that react into a system composed of numerous elements. Students come from different linguistic, cultural, religious, regional, and socio-economic backgrounds which contribute to the melting pot of challenges that must be addressed in teaching and learning. From an educator's perspective, managing all these diversities comes with global and universal social responsibilities (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2000). UNESCO (2020) defines inclusive education as the one that strives towards achieving equity by ways that focuses on all learners overcoming barriers set by background diversity or challenges, thus achieving success. In line with this, a teacher's role is no longer just to transfer knowledge but also to function as an inclusive champion. Teachers are meant to cultivate the spirit of equity, appellee, and belonging in children within a multifaceted classroom.

Pakistan is known for details like being home to over 70 regional languages, but its socio-economic and cultural diversities also add layers to the education system as a whole. There exists rich complexity in the field of education across the country encapsulating the classrooms. Educational institutes like the Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEI) which are managed by the Armed forces of Pakistan and are meant for the children of the military and civilians hold great military relevance. Such schools integrate students from regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, enhancing FGEIs as exemplary in demographic diversity.

However, constellation diversity tends to create heterogenous class composition groups and there is little to no qualitative research available on the attitude of the teachers in "these institutions" towards diversity for inclusion and how they respond to it. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2018) is framed around inclusion focusing on the necessity of aligning teaching methods with students' cultures. Educational equality is supported through frameworks such as Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which seek to optimally support competing students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2014; CAST, 2018). The effectiveness of these frameworks, however, seems to depend on the teacher's disposition, preparedness, and the contextual setting in which the teacher works.

In this case, the researchers intend to investigate the perception of teachers employed in the Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) in Kohat, Pakistan, about managing diversity in their classrooms. Studies suggest that, in general, teachers hold positive perceptions regarding inclusion, but face constraints, such as inadequate training, support, and straightforward guidance (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Ahmed & Sheikh, 2021). These constraints adversely affect teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and prospects of using inclusive approaches within teaching. The previous research which accompanies this paper documented the same patterns within the FGEI framework and

focused on teachers' experiences with and responses to diversity in their classrooms.

This research is thus located at the convergence of teachers' perception, diversity in the classroom, and the preparedness of the institution. This study seeks to provide a detailed perspective on the concept and practice of inclusion in Pakistan's federal schools through the mixed-method approach—quantitative and qualitative—aiming to sharpen the understanding of the embedded realities or 'everyday life' at the ground level. These results can enhance instructional design, influence educational policy, and inform administrative strategies aimed at advancing the supportive frameworks for inclusive education.

Literature Review and Gap Analysis

Education as a whole is both rich and deep in the context of Pakistan. The socio-economic and cultural divides in the country are complemented with 70 regional languages, making the classrooms reflect society itself. This rich diversity has proven to be even more complex in the Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) which are governed by the Ministry of Defense. Students from all over the country are enrolled in these FGEIs, making it a melting pot as learners from different provinces, ethnicities, cultures, and languages come together and represent a unique demographic composition. Despite such juxtaposed diversity, there is little to no research available regarding the perception and management of inclusive classrooms by teachers in FGEIs. The bulk of research done in Pakistan tends to focus on special education inclusivity (Rizvi, 2019; Saeed & Ahmad, 2022) or look at broader policies without analyzing the actual teaching practices within the frameworks (Ahmed & Sheikh, 2021; Ali et al., 2020).

Teachers' perceptions are critical in fostering inclusive and culturally responsive education (Gay, 2018; Banks, 2016; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). There is a lack of research, however, understanding how public-school teachers belonging to FGEI institutions reconcile Federal Government teaching policies with their diversity-responsive pedagogical frameworks in the Pakistani context. In addition, research tends to focus on the intersection of cultural, political, linguistic, and religious ableism without considering how these deeply influence teachers' decisions. This lack of comprehensible focus to the operationalization of inclusion in everyday teaching practice with students from diverse backgrounds, especially in structured public sector entities like the FGEIs, poses a significant gap in scholarly literature. As a starting point, this research attains focus about educational policy, teacher preparation frameworks, institutional restructuring, and overarching policy advancement geared toward inclusion advocacy in Pakistan.

Methodology
Research Design

This study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore the teachers' perception regarding their role in handling diversity in the classroom within Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) in Kohat, Pakistan. The reason for choosing mixed methods was for convenience of collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, as this enhances the understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study

combines quantitative data and qualitative data to portray the narrative surrounding the perceptions of teachers, outlining not just what they perceive but also the rationale behind those perceptions.

Participants
The target population consisted of teachers serving in various FGEIs located in the Kohat region. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure representation across variables such as gender, teaching experience, and subject specialization. The quantitative phase included 37 teachers (23 male, 14 female), ranging in experience from 1 to over 20 years. For the qualitative phase, three teachers were selected for in-depth interviews based on their willingness to participate and their diverse teaching backgrounds. These included both junior and senior staff members capturing a wide spectrum of perspectives. Below are tables and graphical representation of the teacher gender and their experience in teaching.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not Mentioned	11	29.7
	Male	13	35.1
	Female	13	35.1
	Total	37	100.0

Table 3.1 Gender of teacher
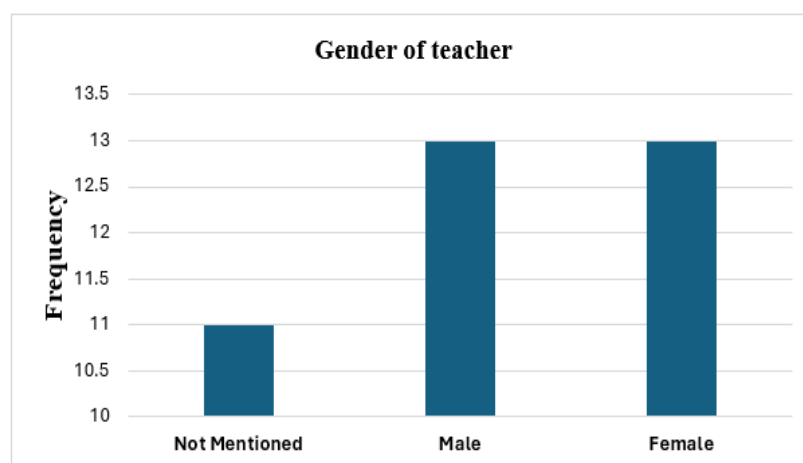
Figure 3.1

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	**1-9 Years**	17	45.9
	10-19 Years	13	35.1
	20 and above	7	18.9
	Total	37	100.0

Table 3.2 Teaching Experience in Years

Figure 4.2

Data Collection Instruments

Survey Questionnaire
Quantitative data was collected through the use of a structured questionnaire which was designed and given to the respondents. The instrument was made up of three parts:
- Relevant demographics
- Teacher's Perception Regarding Diversity, Training, and Institutional Support which assesses perception using a Likert scale
- Typed responses reporting the extent and nature of diversity adaptable approaches implemented

Subject experts checked the questionnaire for content validity, and five FGEI teachers participated in the pilot study for clarity and reliability.

Semi-Structured Interviews
Qualitative information was obtained from semi-structured interviews with three participants. The interview questions aimed at examining:

- Individual working definitions of classroom diversity by the teachers.
- Their self-described roles and obligations regarding diversity management.
- Strategies utilized in practice.
- Challenges faced in employing inclusive strategies.

The interviews were each around 25-35 minutes, conducted in Urdu, and were subsequently transcribed and translated to English for analysis.

Data Analysis

The SPSS application (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was utilized to analyze quantitative data. General trends were obtained through descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and associations between teaching experience and confidence in managing diversity were evaluated cross-tab algebraically.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Response transcripts were subjected to inductive coding and dominant themes were created based on participant responses. Applying multiple perspectives to the quantitative data ensured that the qualitative themes formed from participant responses were consistent with the data and complemented the statistical results.

Ethical Considerations

The research supervisor from the Department of Education AWKUM provided ethical clearance for the study. Informed consent was provided by participants after being fully briefed about the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed during the entire process. Interviewees had the right to withdraw at any given time, and all data collected was stored securely and only for non-commercial scholarly activities.

Results

This segment contains the study's results in two sections: first, the quantitative information collected through standardized surveys, and second, the qualitative information obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings presented here attempt to respond to the first research question:

What is the perception of FGEI teachers concerning their role in addressing diversity in their classrooms?

Item (Q#)	Mean[1]	SD	% Agree[2]	% Disagree[2]
Q1	4.2	1	89%	8%
Q2	4.1	0.6	95%	5%
Q3	4.5	0.7	97%	0%
Q4	4.5	0.7	95%	5%
Q5	4.1	1	90%	8%

Table 4.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Diversity (N = 37)

Quantitative Findings
The analysis of the quantitative data was completed using SPSS. With the aid of descriptive statistics, teachers' perceptions, self-described practices, and challenges experienced were analyzed.

Awareness and Beliefs
- • A total of **94.6%** of teachers regarded management of diversity within their teaching as an important function of their role.
- • **68.2%** acknowledged the contribution of value of diversity toward the enrichment of the learning experience**.**

This shows that FGEI teachers have a relatively high conceptual awareness regarding the significance of diversity and inclusion.

Influence of Teaching Experience
- Approximately **55.4%** of the educators with **1–9 years** of teaching experience stated that they faced challenges with adapting teaching methods to culturally and linguistically diverse learners.
- However, teachers who have spent **10** years or more in the profession reported being more self-assured in managing diverse classrooms.

This validates previous research that posits that experience plays a major role in shaping confidence as well as flexibility in implementing inclusive practices (Gay, 2018; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Instructional Adaptation
- **97%** of respondents stated that they modify teaching materials and design group activities to accommodate student diversity.
- However, only **38%** reported using differentiated instructional strategies regularly.

This reveals a gap between basic efforts (e.g., group work) and deeper, pedagogical adjustments required for effective inclusion.

Challenges Faced
- **49%** of teachers expressed a lack of readiness to manage diversity due to insufficient training.
- **63.5%** pointed to the lack of institutional professional development as a significant barrier.
- **40%** believed they were managing diversity primarily through personal experience and intuition, rather than formal training.

The results illustrate underlying systemic problems in the gaps of teachers' preparation and the level of institution's assistance, which is also in congruence with Ahmed & Sheikh's (2021) conclusions.

Qualitative Findings
Thematic analysis of the interviews produced four major themes:

Theme 1: Inclusive Intent but Limited Capacity
All interview participants emphasized their desire to be inclusive and fair:
"Every child deserves to be listened to; however, they pose a difficulty when it

comes to accessing them all — especially when they don't speak Urdu well or come from different areas."
— Teacher, 4 years' experience.

Teachers accepted constraints in knowledge and resources, even with the best intent. A great number of them based their approaches on social support and prior experiences rather than using formal guides.

Theme 2: Diversity Framed Narrowly

Most teachers conceptualized diversity primarily in terms of language and regional culture. Few mentioned diversities in terms of gender, special needs, or religion, suggesting a limited framework for understanding inclusion.

"I manage kids from Baluchistan, Gilgit, and Punjab all in one class. That is the sort of diversity I manage."

This ruling points to the necessity of better fostering inclusivity in teacher training programs.

Theme 3: Instructional Improvisation

Teachers described adjusting their methods in creative but informal ways:

"I integrate languages, draw on examples from various regions, and allow learners to interact in diverse geographical small groups. It works, but I was never taught how to do it."

This reliance on self-created strategies reflects pedagogical flexibility but also highlights the absence of guided instructional frameworks.

Theme 4: Desire for Institutional Support

Respondents articulated the need for continuous training, the availability of all-inclusive materials, and regard for the administrative aspect of work about diversity:

"We are doing what we can, but being inclusive requires specific tools and proper training which we currently lack."

Discussion

The results from this study provide insight into the manners in which teachers in FGEIs consider and manage classroom diversity. Quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that the majority of teachers understand the significance of diversity management. Remarkably, 94.6% considered the management of diversity as an essential aspect of their responsibilities. This strong awareness indicates that teachers at FGEIs did not remain indifferent to global developments in educational concepts, frameworks, and systems that have inclusivity and equity at the center, (UNESCO, 2020; Banks, 2016).

Nonetheless, there is still disparity in the execution of inclusive procedures. Most teachers reported that they at least tried to change the way they presented group work or used some exemplary items to capture all learners. However, fewer than 40% of those who report using inclusive practices applied differentiated instructions on a sustained basis. This indicates that there is a gap in trying to achieve inclusivity and effective teaching at the level of depth of implementation of instruction-al practices; a phenomenon noted across South Asia and the world (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Tomlinson, 2014). The situation is worse within FGEIs where students come from a mix of regions, cultures, languages and are likely to have different ways of knowing and understanding the same things.

Experience surfaced as a primary factor impacting teaching confidence and capability. More experienced teachers seemed to have no difficulty in strategy modification, confirming prior research that links teaching experience with self-efficacy about inclusive classrooms (Gay, 2000; Ainscow, 2005). Younger teachers, however, even though they appeared to be aware, could not apply the inclusive approaches adequately which points to an earlier career stage need in mentoring and training support.

A vivid observation from the qualitative data was the lack of diversity lens. Most teachers associate diversity with a language or regional affiliation and rarely referred to gender identity, disability, or religion as about minority students. This illustrates an underdeveloped pedagogical and philosophical frame of inclusion that may in reality serve to exclude hidden learners (Abrol, 2023; Florian, 2015). Efforts toward inclusion, without an understanding of diversity in its wider deliberation, are likely to remain shallow, or half-baked."

Moreover, a lack of formal support systems within the institution is evident through the self-created and ad-hoc strategies that participants relied on. Teachers reported using "intuition" and "trial and error" to inform teaching adaptations, rather than having some form of guided practice. In addition to emotional burden, this variation in practice exacerbates siloed systemic fragmentation within a school. Lack of professional development opportunities, mentioned by 63.5% of teachers, highlights the scope of the problem's systemic roots. Like Ahmed & Sheikh (2021), who pointed out that Pakistani educators face a worrying lack of inclusive training, such unmarked gaps resulted from inadequate inclusivity focused planning.

The findings also imply that FGEIs cascading policies do not align with overarching inclusion objectives at the national and global levels. Even as the National Education Policy mentions inclusive education, inclusion has yet to be embedded in the form of regular workshops updates to the curriculum, or monitoring frameworks at the level of federal institutions. This disjuncture deepens the inability gap of teachers between the state of knowledge and its application, thereby deepening the institutional apathy towards inclusion.

The lack of training, tools, or institutional acknowledgment exacerbated the emotional and intellectual strain of dealing with diversity on teachers, which was a common thread in their stories. Teachers cared for their students, and though this system commitment was within the system, it failed to support them, which in turn resulted in feelings of abandonment, burnout, and isolation. These sentiments have been observed in other inclusive education contexts (Slee, 2011; Florian & Rouse, 2009).

This investigation does validate, however, teachers' willingness which is assumed to be the case but not the means, their practices being more inclusive due to exertion rather than design—and frame Peterson's inclusivity paradox. While the FGEI context was particularly distinct in the extent of reach demographically and geographically, it mirrors Pakistan's public education system: increased awareness of diversity met with systemic sluggishness and minimal professional scaffolding.

Key Contributions of This Study:
- It provides empirical insight into teacher perceptions of diversity within a federal institutional framework.

- It identifies the disconnect between policy ideals and classroom realities.
- It highlights the need for comprehensive, multi-dimensional training that goes beyond language and region to include intersectional inclusion.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the perception of teachers working in FGEIs in Kohat, Pakistan regarding their role concerning managing the diversity in their classrooms. It showed that teachers possessed a remarkable concern regarding the inclusive approaches that they utilized to accommodate students' culture, language, and academic achievement levels. In general, however, such awareness was not accompanied by practical or adequate systemic support to implement those practices at workplace.

The quantitative results also highlighted that most, if not all, teachers agreed to the value of diversity. However, close to 50 percent stated that they were not adequately prepared to deal with diversity, especially the younger teachers. More seasoned teachers seemed to have more positive perceptions, which may indicate that a good portion of their inclusive skill set was gained through experience rather than formal training. This was corroborated by qualitative findings which suggested that teachers depend on self-made or ad hoc strategies, which speaks to their resourcefulness and adaptability, but also points to insufficient support from the system.

A critical issue which emerged from the study is the highly restrictive understanding of diversity, which most teachers considered as language or region. Gender identity, disability, and social or religious marginalization were virtually absent in the responses. This raises concern about the theoretical and practical assumptions underlying inclusion within Federal Government Educational Institutions framework and Teacher Education Programs.

The infrequent professional development opportunities, absence of materials fostering inclusivity, and minimal administrative acknowledgement of diversity initiatives differentially impacted teacher capacity. Although there is an attempt to internalize inclusion in the national education policy, its implementation at the school level is patchy.

This case helps broaden the literature on a centralized schooling context by documenting, in-depth, the policy-practice gap in the schooling system. It advocates for a departure from placing diversity management within the confines of a single teacher's agency toward a shared institutional responsibility framework.

Recommendations

To bridge the gap between inclusive intent and effective implementation, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Teacher Education Programs (Pre-service and In-service)

- **Integrate Comprehensive Diversity Modules:** Curriculum designers must include structured content on managing diversity—covering cultural, linguistic, gender, religious, and ability-based dimensions.

- **Embed Inclusive Pedagogy in Training Frameworks:** Culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014), and universal learning design (CAST, 2018) should be central to teacher training models.
- **Use Reflective Practice and Case-Based Learning:** Encourage teachers to reflect on real-life classroom challenges related to inclusion through simulated teaching, peer discussions, and case studies.

For FGEI Administration and School Leadership

- **Establish professional development structures:** Organize regular, context-specific workshops focused on diversity management, inclusive classroom strategies, and multicultural sensitivity.
- **Facilitate peer mentoring programs:** Pair early-career teachers with experienced educators to build capacity through mentorship, modeling, and collaborative planning.
- **Recognize and reward inclusive practices:** Institutional incentives such as "inclusion excellence" awards or credits in performance evaluations can encourage long-term engagement.
- **Provide access to inclusive resources:** Schools should maintain libraries of multicultural teaching aids, translation support materials, and digital tools to address diverse needs.

For Policymakers and Curriculum Authorities

- **Ensure Policy-Implementation alignment:** Translate inclusive education policies into school-based operational guidelines with clear indicators, roles, and accountability structures.
- **Allocate budget for inclusion training and tools:** Allocate funds specifically for professional development in inclusive education, especially in federal and public-sector schools.
- **Conduct national mapping of teacher readiness:** Undertake nationwide research to assess how prepared teachers are for inclusion across various regions, help tailor targeted interventions.

For Future Researchers

- **Replicate this study on both public and private schools:** Implement FGEIs and study their perception and readiness within the context of provincial public schools and private sector schools.
- **Delve into understudied aspects of inclusion diversity:** A focused look at gender, disability, religion, and socio-economic status of inclusive education could offer more nuanced perspectives.
- **Gather response from students and their parents:** Inclusivity extending beyond the teacher at school could be better understood by taking into account student and family perspectives.

Final Reflection

The findings in this study show that teachers are willing to do the tasks at hand but are poorly prepared and managed regarding classroom diversity, almost entirely on an individual's effort rather than a system's effort. There has to be a

shift in thinking where inclusion is no longer considered solely an educational challenge, but a concern that requires everyone in the institution and its policies.

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