



Identity Formation Among Teacher Educators with Visual Impairments in Pakistani Higher Education: A Phenomenological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study employs a phenomenological approach to explore how eight visually impaired teacher-educators in Pakistani higher education institutions shape their identities within institutionally sight-centred environments. Researchers conducted interpretive phenomenological analysis through interviews, journal reflections, and observations to reveal how participants handled the relationship between physical differences and pedagogical competence. This research highlights four main aspects of what it means to exist as a teacher educator with visual impairments: lived body (non-visual engagement with educational spaces), lived relationality (seeking professional recognition within hierarchical structures), lived time (temporal aspects of identity development), and lived space (negotiating accessibility and authority). Participants demonstrate how they surpass stereotypes about people with visual impairment by changing their personal differences into unique teaching practices that question how expert teachers should be seen. The research points out that due to physical absence, teachers rely on different senses, and this changes their traditional beliefs about being skilled in teaching. Blindness is not considered an obstacle to be solved but is thought of as something inspiring and educational. This research provides new concepts for understanding professional identity and suggests ways to create more inclusive policies in Pakistani higher education institutions.



Introduction

The process of professional identity formation among visually impaired teacher-educators requires an analysis of the embodied subjectivity that exists in Pakistan's higher education system and its sociocultural spaces. Visual impairment deepens physical disability into an existential structure that shapes how educators experience teaching in their world (van Manen, 2016). The embodied understanding of disability as knowledge corresponds to the "politics of wonder" described by Titchkosky (2011) because it forces teachers with disabilities to advance a new normative understanding of professional competence. Visual impairment professionals breaking into Pakistani education disrupt longstanding medical and charity-based disability theories which dominate this context (Singal, 2016).

Research on how visually impaired teacher educators form their professional identities operates within a Pakistani higher education framework comprising multiple levels of postcolonial institutional systems and social-religious cultural patterns combined with developing policy systems (Shah & Priestley, 2010). Statutory rights established by the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance of 1981 and the Disability Act of 2020 have yielded little progress towards equal participation for persons with disabilities in higher-education institutions. Institutional implementation diverges from policy statements by compensating for systemic flaws rather than changing the system's structure. The professional environments of teacher educators with visual impairments contain institutional spaces where Michalko (2002) explains "the difference that disability makes" through disjunctive discourses of inclusion combined with practices of marginalisation.

A gap exists in discussions about teacher educator professional identity when it comes to analysing how disabilities meet pedagogical experience, particularly in nations beyond Western boundaries (Berry, 2016). Research on teacher educator identity formation remains extensive, but its underlying studies mainly base their professional development approaches on normal physical experiences (Loughran, 2014; Murray & Male, 2005). Studies in disabled education focus mainly on what students encounter but avoid examining how teachers occupy these positions. Only sparse literature about educators with vision impairments applies technological solutions while ignoring the actual process of becoming a professional (Kapperman et al., 2002). This study analyses the methods through which visually impaired teacher educators in Pakistan develop their professional identity within institutional frameworks based on visual assumptions about teaching competencies.

This study investigates three interconnected questions about visually impaired teacher-education professionals who develop their professional identity within Pakistani higher-education institutions. What aspects of actually living with visual impairment shape both teaching practice and perceptions about one's professional role? The professional identity development of teacher educators works through institutional structures, sociocultural frameworks, and collegial relationships. Through these questions, this study interrogates not only individual narratives but also the intersubjective constitution of professional selfhood at the nexus of embodiment, institutional positioning and cultural meaning-making.

This study investigates the essential ontological foundations of teacher education while studying its fundamentals. This research focuses on real experiences of visually impaired teacher educators to challenge the ableist normative foundation which supports educational institutions and professional requirements. This research fosters decolonisation in disability studies through its phenomenological examination of Pakistani higher education institutions (Meekosha, 2011). The study reveals how visual impairment functions as "the fact of blindness" by examining teachers'

lived experiences during their encounters with institutional others who perceive them differently (Ahmed, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

This study requires a theoretical framework that examines both visually impaired teacher educators' life worlds and professional identity development through educational practice. This framework combines existential phenomenology with disability theory and sociocultural studies of becoming professionals to create a contextual analysis which recognises bodily differences in educational settings (van Manen, 2016).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) features the body as the original basis for worldly perception through his concept of the "flesh of the world" which describes sensory interaction as an existential state expressing being-in-the-world because perception goes beyond biological mechanics. The visually impaired body provides experiential characterisations of teaching presence besides sensory limitations through the "difference that disability makes" to sensory encounters (Michalko, 2010). According to Titchkosky (2011), the "politics of wonder" enables a transformative examination of normal bodily understandings by experiencing physical uniqueness. From a phenomenological perspective, visual impairment exists as a particular life orientation that transforms the way educators perceive and deal with their pedagogical realm.

Critical disability theory enhances phenomenological studies by analysing the social and political elements of how embodiment shapes lived experiences when people interact with institutions (Goodley, 2016). Foucault's work on power analysis serves to understand how Campbell (2009), alongside other critical disability theorists, demonstrates how "regimes of normality" create through "ableist regulatory norms" the construction of body deficiencies that exist across educational settings and certification requirements, as well as teaching expectations. These normalising systems function beyond physical barriers to discrimination by creating a "tyranny of the normal" (Hughes, 2007), which establishes the subtle dominance of specific bodily approaches in educational areas. The visually impaired teacher-educator works to establish a professional identity through structures where Davis (1995) describes "the enforcement of normalcy, which claims inclusion yet practices invisible but intensive forms of body-based marginalisation.

According to sociocultural perspectives that examine their interaction with professional traditions and organisational practices, teacher educators' (Wenger, 1998) professional becoming represents the active engagement with the "acquisition-participation metaphor" as defined by Sfard (1998), while involving full socialisation within disciplinary language practices and institutional pedagogical communities and their corresponding norms. The participation of visually impaired teacher educators requires expert performances of their expertise, as described by Dall'Alba (2009) which breaks down visual-centric assumptions about teaching competencies. Social identity development becomes understandable through this theoretical integration because professionals construct their identities jointly between individual actions and their participation in communities based on assumptions about embodiment and expert knowledge.

To investigate the intersubjective formation of professional selfhood, this study draws on Heidegger's (1962) theory of Dasein being fundamentally interdependent with "others" in their world. According to Gadamer (1975), professional identity emerges from the mutual horizon union between individuals' lived experiences and the institutional discourses of competence and professional authority. Visual impairment requires teacher educators to develop "orientation devices" as outlined by Ahmed (2006), to navigate the professional realms of sighted people. This

theoretical framework examines the social geographic dimension of bodies, as described by (Paterson and Hughes (1999), who describe how bodily variations face exclusion from traditional institutional spaces meant for average bodies.

According to Brazilian theorist Freire (1970), reflective action built from critical consciousness forms the basis of pedagogical practice. The educational practice of visually impaired educator mentors requires "critical disability praxis" which O'Toole (2013) describes as teaching methods that use embodiment differences to create educational strengths rather than impairments. This theoretical framework acknowledges how visually impaired teacher educators cross boundaries between ability and disability, and expert and novice, as they become professionals (Shildrick, 2012).

Through the integration of these theoretical perspectives—phenomenological understandings of embodiment, critical disability theory, sociocultural approaches to professional development, intersubjective constitution of selfhood, and critical conceptualisations of praxis—this study establishes an analytical framework sensitive to the ontological complexities, political dimensions, and pedagogical implications of identity formation among visually impaired teacher educators in Pakistani higher-education contexts.

Literature Review

Academic research on teacher educator identity growth shows a fundamental difference between fixed notions of professional identity and identity formation as an interactive social process within learning communities (Beijaard et al., 2004). Contemporary studies in teacher educator identity research confirm that their professional identity develops as a result of constant interaction among personal backgrounds, organisational roles, and subject matter expertise (Murray, 2014). Professional identity emerges through continuous interaction between different I-positions in personal narratives which alter with time and context. Williams and Ritter (2010) refer to this developmental change as "boundary crossing" which involves significant rethinking of the educational self-concept when transitioning between teaching and teaching educator roles in structured academic systems.

Studies found in the phenomenological literature show how physical differences reshape both individual professional experiences and the mutual recognition and status of professionals in their workplaces (Michalko, 2002). Disability barriers present as inclusive institutional structures, together with professional assumptions and cultural stereotypes of professional competence, which associate unaided vision with professional ability (French, 2007). Experts in the field of professional domains have identified the pervasive "ocularcentrism" described by Titchkosky (2011) because they equate deficient competence solely with auditory, tactile, and other sensory modalities that fail to meet the standard of vision. Visual impairment allows people to develop "alternative corporeographies" as described by Paterson and Hughes (1999) which transform professional boundaries meant for sighted people into unique educational resources.

Research on disability studies in Pakistani educational environments shows conflicting forces between inclusive laws and actual institutional practices which create barriers to participation (Singal, 2016). Pakistani higher-education institutions primarily use a "charitable-medical binary" model for disability accommodation but toggle between patronising methods and medical treatment approaches which ward off social critiques. The professional experiences of disabled educators in Pakistan are characterised by epistemic marginalisation. Ghai (2019) reveals how institutions devalue non-normative embodiment, even though they actively promote

diversification. According to Shah and Priestley (2010), the "capability restraint paradigm" represents institutional logics which dismiss the actual capabilities of disabled professionals while ignoring environmental barriers.

Scholarly research now explores the connections between professional standing, educational expertise, and disability, revealing how embodied diversity changes teaching practices and basic pedagogical understanding. Campbell's (2009) study reveals how teaching licensure standards, along with assessment criteria and educational expectations, exclude non-normative bodily types which should be recognised as valid professional capabilities instead of needing exceptional accommodation. Price (2014) explains these spaces as "kairotic" environments with normative time frameworks and arranged spaces that create natural advantages for able-bodied candidates, even when advancement requires purportedly objective standards (Price, 2014).

Academic studies focused on visually impaired educators explore particular teaching methods which reshape traditional educational practices (Whitburn, 2014). Titchkosky (2008) establishes disability as an "interpretive relation" to show visually impaired educators consistently work through the "politics of appearance" to control both their teaching practices and peer beliefs about professional capabilities within buildings shaped by ableist prejudice. According to Garland-Thomson (2011), "misfitting" describes this negotiation process which enables embodied difference to work both as possible limitations and professional assets within professional contexts (Garland-Thomson, 2011).

Research shows that insufficient theoretical and empirical evidence exists on how visually impaired teacher educators develop their identities, particularly in non-Western settings. Studies on teacher identity formation focus primarily on normal bodily experiences as the key basis for professional development (Loughran, 2013) but exclude disability from their analysis, thus making it peripheral rather than essential to forming an educational identity. Research on disability in education focuses primarily on student experiences instead of addressing teacher positions which prevents an understanding of the specific teaching experiences of those who are visually impaired (Goodley, 2016). Few studies on visually impaired teaching professionals focus on the ontological aspects of professional growth because their approaches have prioritised instruments for technological device usage instead of exploring professional development (Kapperman et al., 2002). The methodological approaches used survey large populations through generalised statistics or analyse single participants while failing to establish clear connexions between the social elements of becoming a professional (Shakespeare, 2014).

This study focuses on the gap between professional identity research from a phenomenological perspective and critical disability theory when analysing how embodied differences affect pedagogical practices in Pakistani higher-education institutions. This research study resolves a missing gap through hermeneutic phenomenological research that reveals how visually impaired teacher-educators face institutional pedagogical and embodied challenges as they create their professional identity. This phenomenological study both promotes the theoretical reform of professional identity beyond vision-centred perspectives and provides practical guidelines for organisation-wide changes to significantly incorporate distinct teaching competencies.

Methods

This study employs hermeneutic phenomenology which serves as an interpretive discipline that reveals the lived experiences of phenomena by recognising their inherent interpretive foundation (van Manen, 2016). The study employs a methodology that moves according to the hermeneutic

circle, which joins different components and overall perspectives while linking pre-existing understandings with new perceptions (Gadamer, 1975).

The principle of double hermeneutics defined by Smith and Osborn (2008) matches the philosophical roots of the technique which acknowledges how phenomenological understanding emerges through researchers' analyses of participants' interpretations of lived experiences. The study of visual impairment teacher educator identity development requires this interpretive approach because it enables researchers to investigate Merleau-Ponty (1962) "corporeal schema" comprising embodied patterns of perception and physical awareness that predate abstract reflection. Visual impairment transforms into an existential framework, allowing individuals to manifest their professional existence while gaining meaning through a hermeneutic-phenological approach (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

The purposeful sampling methods used by the researcher selected participants whose real-life encounters provided an in-depth look at the investigated phenomenon according to Patton (2002) standards of "information-rich cases" (Patton, 2002). The participating teacher educators needed to fulfil three conditions: self-identifying as visually impaired through WHO classification standards, maintaining their educational positions at Pakistani higher education institutions for no less than three years, and showing a genuine interest in exploring their lived experiences. Eight eligible participants, comprising five males and three females, were selected through official correspondence between higher education institutions and disability advocacy networks in Pakistan's provinces, where they served various educational institutes, such as public universities, teacher training colleges, and educational research institutions.

The research data collection combined three methods: phenomenological interviews, reflective journal entries, and observational techniques. According to Seidman (2013), the main methodology employed three-interview series which develops as "sequential dialogues exploring life history and contemporary experience and reflective meaning-making." The research team used close experiential questioning during these interviews which lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, and helped participants share lived experiences rather than theoretical explanations (van Manen, 2016). The interview method adopted phenomenological questioning according to Bevan (2014) which included contextualisation, then moved to experiencing the event, and finally used imaginative variations to clarify the phenomenon, thus advancing the depth of phenomenological analysis (Bevan, 2014).

Participant reflective journals supplied supplementary data sources which Giorgi (2009) describes as "written lived experience descriptions" showing direct accounts of particular experiences regarding professional identity formation inside academic settings (Giorgi, 2009). Participants recorded important events, personal encounters, and reflective thoughts throughout an eight-month timeline which generated textual data that would be classified as "experiential anecdotes" involving phenomenological patterns of experienced reality (van Manen, 1991).

Analytical procedures followed the interpretive phenomenological analysis framework developed by Smith et al. (2009), characterised by iterative movement through six interconnected phases: (1) immersive reading of individual transcripts; (2) preliminary noting of descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual elements; (3) development of emergent themes; (4) identification of connections across emergent themes; (5) sequential analysis of each case; and (6) identification of patterns across all cases. The analytical approach followed "bridling" as defined by Dahlberg et al. (2008) by keeping an open perspective to the phenomenon, even though it restrained prior assumptions that could stop the interpretation. The interpretive process conducted two simultaneous operations known as "hermeneutics of faith" and "hermeneutics of suspicion", as defined by Ricoeur (2024) which

combined respect for participant accounts with an understanding of how those accounts mirror discursive power dynamics (Ricoeur, 2024).

The research process remained ethical at every step because ethical actions were taken in the original manner of interacting with the other before ontological understanding. The researcher obtained institutional review board approval from their university, alongside consent procedures that followed ethical practice principles of ongoing dialogue (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The research followed Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) concept of "ethical reflexivity" by analysing power imbalances between the researcher and participants because the researcher was sighted when investigating visual impairment. The demand for accessibility led the research team to furnish participants with their preferred formats, including Braille, electronic text, and audio recording, alongside selecting comfortable and autonomous interview environments.

The researcher needed constant self-reflection about their "historically effected consciousness" Gadamer (1975) defined it, Gadamer (1975) to recognise how their own reality shaped their interpretation process. The principal investigator, positioned as a researcher with sight, conducted critical studies of Titchkosky's (2011) "politics of perception" or the academic cultural preference for sight-based viewing that shapes research validity assumptions. The researcher adopted a phenomenological attitude which means being openly curious about participants' lived experiences without losing sight of their own position within phenomenological understanding (Finlay, 2008).

The research procedures followed the naturalistic enquiry criteria described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which include credibility and transferability, along with dependability and confirmability. The process of member checking allowed participants to review their transcribed words and research findings while helping them achieve an authentic understanding (Martin Heidegger, 1962). Transparency in research practices allows the generation of "trustworthiness through transparency" (KochKoch (2006) through documented analytical decisions, methodological choices, and interpretive pathways. The data triangulation method enables researchers to reveal different perspectives on lived experiences (without seeking factual proof) (Denzin, 1970). The research methods established "phenomenological validity" by revealing lived experiences which both participants and academic researchers who explore this phenomenon could understand (van Manen, 2016).

Findings

Introduction to Participants

We worked with eight visually impaired teacher educators who were active in public universities in Punjab, Pakistan. Participants were aged between 32 and 54 years and came from different backgrounds, such as education, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and Islamic studies. Many of them started off with impaired vision from being born, whereas some started to lose sight while in school. All the participants were from various universities, both rural and urban, and were seven people, with teaching experience ranging from 2 to 11 years.

All the people participating in the study showed strong skills in overcoming the obstacles set by institutions. They had to perform according to the standards of their culture, concentrate on their chosen studies, and suppress their feelings in school. Based on what the participants shared, we can explain how visual impairment can impact teaching, career perception, and their dealings with various educational environments.

The Embodied Nature of Pedagogical Knowing

Participants often told us that facing their condition made them reconsider teaching using various approaches that go against the usual ways of understanding the senses. Dr. Ahmed, a professor who has been blind since birth, disclosed how he developed his teaching by making use of touch and sound.

When preparing lectures, I do not visualise concepts on boards or slides. Therefore, I develop pictures in my mind and move around them using sound, touch, and space. My students often say that they understand complex theories better because I break them down into patterns they can hear and feel, not just see.

All participants stressed the central role of the embodied approach in learning. Dr. Fatima, who gradually lost her vision during her doctoral studies in linguistics, described her transformation as follows:

Initially, I thought my career was over when my vision deteriorated. I noticed that studying the way language is written differs from noticing its actual texture and rhythm. I now teach phonetics and syntax in ways that make abstract concepts tangible for my students.

The participants described how their use of alternative methods strengthened their teaching methods stronger instead of weaker. Professor Malik, who teaches psychology, shared his approach to complex theoretical concepts:

I extensively use storytelling, role-playing, and discussion-based methods. Students are more involved because they cannot sit back and watch the information given in pictures. A person should pay attention, raise questions, and join the conversation to learn. This creates deeper learning than that achieved in traditional lecture formats.

They affected classroom control and the most basic understanding of knowledge. Dr. Sarah, who teaches sociology, explained how her visual impairment influenced her understanding of social phenomena.

I experience social interactions through voice tones, spatial dynamics, and emotional undertones that sighted people often miss while concentrating on visual cues. This provides insights into the social structures and relationships that inform my teaching in unique ways.

Negotiating Professional Legitimacy

Learners' efforts to build professional credibility required everyone to continuously display their capabilities in accordance with the established norms in their learning institutions. According to the participants, constant issues with obedience made them respond carefully by showing respect for others while remaining confident in their expertise.

Dr. Hassan, a senior lecturer in Islamic studies, recounted his early career struggles:

When I first joined the university, my colleagues questioned whether I could effectively teach religious texts without reading them visually. It was necessary for me to show my educators that all those years of studying the Quran made me understand the scripture better than just reading it on the surface level. Even now, after 15 years, new colleagues sometimes express surprise at my capabilities.

Individuals in these fields would usually turn issues seen as shortcomings into important traits for their businesses. Dr. Amina, who taught English literature, described her strategic approach as follows:

Students initially doubted my ability to teach poetry and literary analysis without visual access to the texts. I analysed poetry and found that reading it aloud makes the rhythm, various emotions, and the parts of the structure more noticeable. My students now prefer my interpretation methods because they experience literature through multiple senses.

The study's members pointed out that people's attitudes towards their abilities had to be managed constantly. Professor Khan, who had administrative responsibilities alongside teaching duties, shared his experience:

The university administration initially resisted assigning me leadership roles, assuming that I could not handle complex organizational tasks. Step by step, I handled small tasks and proved myself by delivering satisfactory results instead of talking about them. Now I coordinate faculty development programs and serve on academic committees, but the journey required constant proof of competence.

It was not only individuals who worked on legitimacy but also the entire institutional culture. Dr. Zara, who teaches educational psychology, reflected on her impact as follows:

When I first arrived, the university had minimal accommodations and low expectations of disabled faculty. Because of what I have done and stand for, we enjoy better support and a more accepting attitude. Younger disabled faculty members have easier paths because of the groundwork laid by pioneers like us.

Temporal Dimensions of Identity Formation

The participants' professional identity development showed unique timeframes that were very different from the usual career paths. Having an eye disease, going to school, and entering the working world led to unique times in life that influenced the participants' identities.

For those born with blindness, it was important for professionals to direct participants towards work that society thought they should not do. Dr. Ahmed reflected on his educational journey.

From childhood, my family and teachers discouraged academic pursuits, suggesting that I should learn traditional skills like Quranic recitation or handicrafts. It has always been tough for many to achieve success while maintaining a high standard of education. Every educational milestone seemed to me like occupying areas where I was not accepted.

Vision problems changed the participants' lives by having them grieve, cope, and eventually settle into things. Fatima said that losing her sight during her PhD studies was as if she had lost her hopes for the future:

I had to change the way I worked as a researcher, teacher, and professional. This process took years and required learning new technologies, developing alternative methodologies, and reconstructing my sense of scholarly competence.

Professionals are encouraged to continue learning new things throughout their careers. Professor Malik described his evolving teaching philosophy as follows:

Early in my career, I focused on proving that I could do everything my sighted colleagues could do. Over time, I realised that my value lay not in mimicking

normative approaches but in developing distinctive pedagogical innovations that enhanced student learning through alternative methods.

It became clear that having many positive outcomes at work led individuals to strengthen their professional identity. Dr. Sarah's reflections demonstrate this evolution:

Initially, every semester felt like starting over, proving my worth repeatedly. After regularly receiving good reviews, publishing research, and being recognised by the institution over the years, I became confident in my profession. I now focus on mentoring other disabled academics and advancing inclusive education practices.

Pedagogical Adaptations as Identity Enactment

Participants' ways of teaching were not just ways of adjusting but real ways of identifying who they were as professionals, which both teachers and students felt in the classroom. It became clear that educators adapted to visual impairment by creating special methods instead of seeing it as something to get around to.

Innovative ways of keeping students interested and assisting their learning were shown through the management methods. Dr. Hassan described his discussion-based methodology as follows:

I structure classes around Socratic dialogue and collaborative learning rather than lecture-based delivery methods. As learners cannot become active or critical just by watching, they should be involved in using the materials. My blindness forces me to innovate pedagogically, which benefits everyone.

The use of technology showed numerous ways to teach that made learning better rather than worse. Professor Khan explained his multimedia approach as follows:

I extensively use audio recordings, voice recognition software, and collaborative platforms. Materials are available in several ways for students, and they join online discussions in addition to participating in classroom activities. My technological fluency, developed through necessity, creates richer learning environments.

Assessment activities and feedback were adjusted to suit different methods and continue requiring students to work hard. Dr. Amina detailed her evaluation methods as follows:

I use oral examinations, collaborative projects, and portfolio-based assessments more than I use traditional written tests. They allow teachers to understand students' work in greater detail than usual tests. Students often prefer these approaches because they allow diverse learning styles and knowledge demonstration.

Mentoring and research were conducted differently depending on how teachers handled different challenges. For example, one participant stated:

My philosophy of mentoring is to help students with research and underline critical thinking, creative methodology, and alternative ideas. Since I have faced academic challenges myself, I see how well innovative techniques can help students succeed, different from the usual ways.

Sociocultural Mediations of Professional Selfhood

When visually impaired people in Pakistan tried to show who they are professionally, they had to handle many social and cultural complications.

There were both good and bad aspects of joining a certain religion or culture for those who became professionals. For example, one participant stated:

The truth is that our religion urges us to seek knowledge, no matter what challenges we have in life. Therefore, I learned and worked twice as hard, even though many people tried to discourage me. However, issues surrounding disability that were accepted in the culture were too great to be handled only by following religious teachings.

Initially, Dr. Fatima's family felt that her studies were farfetched because she had a vision problem. According to them, disabled women were supposed to remain at home or take part in teaching them: "Demonstrating my skills in my field meant challenging social views on disability and gender simultaneously."

Depending on the campus, support and belonging helped professionals determine their professional identity. For example, one participant stated that some universities welcomed diversity and ensured that his work was valued there. Others continued to hold traditional beliefs and kept making requests for all kinds of basic accommodations and recognition in their profession.

Students' actions and involvement significantly impacted the way teachers perceived themselves. For example, one participant stated:

At first, students were sceptical of my teaching, but gradually they started to value and respect my teaching style. What had the greatest importance to me was receiving positive feedback and making progress in learning rather than getting praised at work. Students joined efforts to overcome the obstacles placed by institutions.

Being involved in the community through networking and helping others improved individuals' confidence in making society a better place. Dr. Amina described her involvement in disability rights organisations as follows:

Connecting with other disabled professionals, both locally and internationally, strengthened my professional identity and provided me with strategies for institutional change. These networks became sources of support, collaboration, and advocacy that individual efforts alone could not achieve.

Integration and Synthesis

These participants found it complex and ongoing to form a professional identity, since they must deal with differences in their bodies, expectations in education, and goals for themselves throughout their careers. Despite many challenges, they worked hard to improve themselves and their students' education.

Regardless of the account, the participants turned their vision challenges into strengths that allowed them to be creative with teaching, learning, and communicating with the school's community. Because disability was a central piece of their work, they were able to combine their personal and professional ideas.

They showed that each person's efforts and organised support from communities contributed to the change in institutions. The participants were the first to open doors for future academics with disabilities by pushing for better access, inclusion, and appreciation of their accomplishments.

Teacher educators showed that doing an excellent job in education looks different depending on how one acts as a teacher. What they go through demonstrates that traditional views of successful studying have little relevance and that inclusive strategies in education help everyone by bringing in more ideas, better access to learning, and welcoming different viewpoints.

Discussion

Based on this study, it is evident that visually impaired teacher educators in Pakistani higher education must handle the difficult process of creating their professional identity compared to others, especially since their qualifications are not always respected by their colleagues. Participants' stories reveal that blindness does not stop them from doing outstanding work in teaching but encourages them to use their own ways of thinking to create different and valuable teaching methods in the educational sector.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), perception comes mainly from one's body and does not only focus on the mind, so using other sensory tools supports different conceptions of teaching and learning. Examples of participants imagining mental layouts and capturing information through all their senses confirm that their physical differences have a positive impact rather than being a challenge to their expertise. The discovery opposes the common belief of higher education institutions that all education should happen through vision and points out that learning methods can be improved by taking in knowledge and transmitting it in different physical ways.

According to what participants reported, always having to prove themselves professionally points to the stigma management concept proposed by Goffman (2009). Nevertheless, participants' development goes beyond personal actions by playing a key role in transforming the institution by repeatedly presenting alternative methods of teaching excellence. It is their success in achieving professional status and still being true to who they are as disabled individuals that reflects Garland-Thomson's (2011) idea of "misfits." This proves how publications can be changed by having differently embodied academics challenge commonly held ideas about who should have authority in academia.

According to the participants, many steps and passages of time are involved in forming a professional identity when disability is part of a person's career path. For those born without vision, Ahmed (2006) explains that forming a professional identity in unsuitable spaces calls for "queer" approaches to the environment. Ricoeur (2024) noted that when people living with vision loss lost their sight during their career, they had to work on reconstructing their narrative identity by uniting their changed bodies with their lives at work. These patterns show that the formation of professional identity among disabled academics is not the same as the usual path to a career.

The teachers' shifts in instruction were a way of upholding their profession and showed that dealing with disability is a key part of creating new educational methods. What makes their methods different from Freire's is how they adjust them for every bodily situation. According to the participants, by applying these disability-driven teaching methods, everyone learns better and has more opportunities to explore different concepts. As Titchkosky (2011) pointed out, the main purpose of accessibility is to transform education.

The way participants handled their professional and personal lives in Pakistani society was shown by how culture, religion, and institutions influenced them. This shows that Crenshaw (1991) meant that having multiple identities can result in people feeling privileged in some ways and marginalised in others. As Pakistani societies have certain attitudes towards disability, participants were expected to handle differing cultural influences while making their livelihoods as professionals.

When the studies are combined, it shows that professional identity formation keeps growing by the constant discussion of what it means to be different in the field, as well as the demands of schools and what a person aspires to do, resulting in educational changes due to the influence of diverse professionals in the field. Young people succeeding in achieving professional excellence and

maintaining their disability identity shows that the idea of ‘crip futures’ suggested by (Kafer (2013) could create new ways for educators of various backgrounds to belong in the classroom.

These findings allow us to better consider inclusivity in higher education and notice that such changes come about through the efforts of adults and group advocacy. It appears from the participants’ voices that for disabled academics to form a professional identity, their environments should recognise how their differences are a source of new approaches in education, rather than treating them as problems. This shows that higher education can improve access and welcome more people when it acknowledges contributions from diverse specialists and fresh teaching ideas derived from people’s diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion

This study reveals that being visually impaired and a teacher educator in Pakistan involves facing many challenges that impact their self-understanding and role at work. The study shows that teachers with visual impairment have a different but effective approach to building and passing on knowledge that guides them to take innovative approaches in education.

The participants in this study showed that creating their professional identity requires them to balance accepting who they are as people with disabilities and meeting the expectations of the institution. How they manage to be highly skilled and at the same time themselves shows that there are other forms of academia for teachers who approach teaching differently. Because of their differing approaches, teachers are introducing novel teaching methods, team learning, and testing methods aside from tests, which boost the education of all students by making their learning experiences more understandable and varied.

This study points out that the identity development of blind people often looks different from that of other people, needing either backward preparation for expected roles in society or major changes that affect their identity. Since these issues are chronological, universities must know what specific support disabled teachers require and notice alternative routes to being expert teachers.

The sociocultural study in Pakistan shows that religious, cultural, and institutional aspects help or limit professional selfhood and call for strategic ways of dealing with them. Those who have succeeded in changing university cultures and establishing a prominent reputation in their fields show that embracing diversity can play a key role in new learning and teaching ideas.

This research examines how welcoming higher education to more people is made possible by individuals with diverse bodies who challenge the usual views of who can perform well academically. It seems that for disabled professors, supportive institutions that are open to other concepts of teaching success and allow active participation in making changes are necessary.

This raises concerns about the meaning of educational knowledge and expertise in college and university settings. Through the daily experiences of visually impaired teacher educators, this research highlights how being different makes teaching more flexible and, in turn, helps all participants gain access to information and different teaching methods in ways that encourage inclusivity.

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