Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 12 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

How Teachers Experience the Contradictions Between Islamic Identity and Global Citizenship Education: A Phenomenological Study in Elite Schools in Pakistan

Dr. Yaar Muhammad
Associate Professor, Department of Education, GC Women University, Sialkot, Pakistan Email: Yaar.Muhammad@gcwus.edu.pk

Dr. Naima Qureshi
Assistant Professor, Division of Education, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: naima.qureshi@ue.edu.pk

Fareeha Farooq
Teacher, Beacon House School System, Sialkot, Pakistan
Email: fareehakhawaja001@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This transcendental phenomenological research examines the experiences of teachers in elite schools in Pakistan who encounter contradictions between Islamic identity and global citizenship education (GCE). After conducting a phenomenological interview with twelve participants teaching in English-medium elite schools, this study is able to unveil the lived experiences of teachers who are facing conflict between the values of religious-cultural identity and cosmopolitan global citizenship values. The study used the transcendental phenomenological approach that involved the rigorous procedures of Epoché, Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation, and Synthesis to reveal meanings and textural-structural themes. The results show that five overarching themes exist that include negotiating sacred and secular pedagogies, experiencing identity fragmentation, embodying dual consciousness, navigating institutional pressures, and transforming through dialectical engagement. The nature of teachers' experience is characterised by a continuous ontological tension in which teachers are paradoxically committed to the same thing, which makes them work out lived spaces of pedagogical ambivalence that, in the end, results in the creation of transformative possibilities through rethinking citizenship education beyond binary thinking.

Keywords: Islamic Identity, Global Citizenship Education, Transcendental Phenomenology, Teacher Experience, Elite Schools, Pakistan, Lived Experience

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching experience within a clash of competing ideologies is one of the most significant challenges for contemporary teachers in Muslim-majority countries. Pakistani teachers have an exceptionally ambivalent pedagogical role in which they need to balance the needs of global citizenship education, which is known to promote universal human rights, pluralism, and cosmopolitan values, with strictly entrenched loyalty to Islamic identity and belonging to a community (Ashraf et al., 2021). This tension between the global and the religious, the universal, and the particular is not just an intellectual issue but an experience that is visceral and embodied, and which outlines the professional identity of teachers, their pedagogical decisions, and their existential orientations (Pasha, 2025; Shaikh, 2025; Tahir & Habib, 2025).

The phenomenon of ideological contradiction in the sphere of teaching is the result of a rather unique Pakistani socio-educational situation, when elite schools of English medium are considered the main centres of future leader preparation, as well as spaces arranging cultural-religious authenticity. In Pakistani educational systems, global citizenship in education has become increasingly popular, especially in the higher and elite education systems that embrace international educational programs, such as Cambridge programs in global studies and International Baccalaureate programs (Kester et al., 2025; Khizar et al., 2025; Kosar, 2024). The institutional requirement to produce internationally competent citizens compels teachers to focus on the development of these competencies. However, this does not necessarily leave a national identity of Pakistan as an Islamic Republic, accompanied by social demands that education must enhance, not weaken, Muslim identity, which inevitably creates incompatibilities among educators (Pasha, 2015; Shar, 2024; Zaheer, 2022).

Autobiographically, this investigation emerges from the researchers observing the visible discomfort of teachers whenever the subject of gender equality, religious pluralism, and secular governance is mentioned—areas where the GCE frameworks and Islamic educational philosophy seem to be irreconcilable. The social value of comprehending these contradictions lies not only in the individual well-being of teachers but is also related to the formation of national identities, social life, and Pakistan's positioning in the global educational context (Akhtar, 2024; Ashraf et al., 2021; Bano & Hina, 2020). The experiences of teachers in negotiating these contradictions essentially influence the way the very concept of citizenship is defined and transferred to the young generation of elites in Pakistan, who will assume power and influence positions (Rauf & Muhammad, 2025; Rauf, Muhammad, & Yousaf, 2024; Rauf et al., 2025).

Although the current literature addresses global citizenship education and its purposes in the Muslim context from various perspectives (Bano & Hina, 2020; Kadiwal & Jain, 2020; Muhammad & Brett, 2019), research on the subject also involves policy analysis (or comparative curriculum studies) instead of a phenomenological approach to studying the lived experience of teachers (Jalbani & Khan, 2022; Pasha, 2022; Siddique & Khawaja, 2021). Research focuses on identifying the teacher perceptions of GCE exists (Khan & Tabassum, 2024; Saddiqa et al., 2020; Shar et al., 2023) but seldom examines the experience of the contradiction between competing identity frameworks existentially. Phenomenologically, little research has been conducted on

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Volume 3, Issue 12 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189
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the meanings, essences, and structure of the consciousness behind the process of teachers navigating tensions in Islamic-global citizenship (Boni & Calabuig, 2021).
There are fundamental questions about the quality of simultaneous attachment to apparently opposing ideological commitments.
How do teachers perceive and describe their embodied experiences when pedagogical demands conflict with religious and cultural identities?
What structures of temporality, spatiality, and relationality constitute the lived world of educators negotiating these tensions?
Such dimensions of phenomenology need to be explored to understand not only the opinions of teachers, but also the essential structures of their lived experiences (Peoples, 2020).
This paper attempts to fill these gaps by adding the following research question: What is the lived experience of teachers navigating contradictions between Islamic identity and global citizenship education in elite schools in Pakistan? Such terms as Islamic identity, global citizenship education, and elite schools have to be explained: “Islamic identity” is the understanding of teachers that they are Muslims and that religious commitments inform the pedagogical philosophy and professional identity, “global citizenship education” is the curriculum and pedagogy that should create cosmopolitan orientations, awareness of universal human rights, and transnational solidarity, and “elite schools” are English-medium private institutions which serve privileged socioeconomic class of Pakistan and use international curricula
This phenomenological inquiry provides a crucial knowledge base on the consciousness structures underlying teachers' experiences that reveal the meanings that occur when teachers inhabit contradictory ideological spaces. The paper proceeds by a literature review which forms theoretical-empirical backgrounds, methodology which gives explicates transcendental phenomenological processes, findings which give textural-structural themes, discussion which gives linkages of essences to the existing literature, and a conclusion which synthesises implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tensions Within Global Citizenship Education

The concept of global citizenship education as such is consistently fraught with contradictions which scholars are increasingly viewing as beneficial tensions rather than flaws in teaching methods (Boni & Calabuig, 2017). Its very concept is a juridical impossibility—citizenship demands bounded political communities, and global implies transcendence of such boundaries—creating what has been labelled the Janus-facedness of GCE, wherein teachers create national subjects and cosmopolitan citizens simultaneously (Boni & Calabuig, 2017). It has been shown that GCE can be a tool of neoliberal globalisation and Western hegemony, and not intercultural dialogue, especially problematic in postcolonial settings, such as in Pakistan, where schools have historically been used to serve colonial agendas (Abdul Hameed, 2019; Maqbool & Cremin, 2024; Rahman, 2005, 2006);
Further contradictions between the secular-liberal foundations of GCE and the religious-communal identity framework occur in the Muslim-majority societies (Yağdı, 2025). Research results in the Netherlands indicate that practitioners of Islamic Religious Education consider integration with Citizenship Education an

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

option and continue to consider it desirable, though to different degrees, depending on the level of various dimensions of citizenship (Essabane et al., 2022). It is not clear how GCE is able to accommodate religious distinctiveness without going into relativism, and this has made the task of teachers who will implement such curricula confusing (Akkari & Maleq, 2020; Gaus, 2021).

Islamic Identity and Citizenship Education in Pakistan

Pakistan is an important place to study issues of Islamic identity and citizenship education tensions because it is both an Islamic state and a modern nation trying to pursue development (Aman, 2021). A study of the attitudes of teachers working in the stratified education systems of Pakistan, including religious madrassas, national public schools, and international curriculum schools, indicated that there is a dramatic disparity in the conception of GCE (Ashraf et al., 2021). In the religious sector, educators consider GCE to be a threat to Islamic values and insist on developing Islamic identity, whereas in international schools, educators believe that GCE is economically beneficial and compatible with selective Islamic principles (Ashraf et al., 2021).

Research on citizenship education and religious minorities in Pakistan captures the routinised forms of violence that sectarian curriculum constructions entail against students who are non-Muslim, pointing to the fact that citizenship education in Pakistan continues to be highly exclusionary despite culturally inspired claims of promoting pluralism. Elite schools have conflicting roles in this landscape, since they are both simultaneously detached and engaged in social stratification processes (Rauf & Muhammad, 2025). The analysis of elite school textbooks in Pakistan shows indications of problematic silences in terms of rights, deterministic historical accounts, and externally imposed structures that impede critical citizenship development (Rauf & Muhammad, 2024, 2025; Rauf, Muhammad, & Batool, 2024).

Teacher Identity and Ideological Contradictions

Teachers' professional identity is constructed as a result of negotiations between personal beliefs and institutional requirements and expectations imposed by society (Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). Teacher educators who focus on the role of social-psychological factors in professional identity formation indicate that identity formation presupposes multifaceted processes of critical thought, emotional work, and unending negotiation between opposing frameworks (Schepens et al., 2009; Suarez & Mcgrath, 2022). Teachers, who are dissonant between personal and pedagogical demands, implement different techniques, such as selective appropriation, reinterpretation, and compartmentalisation (Pillen et al., 2013).

Muslim teachers in Western contexts report that they are faced with identity tensions when religious opinions are sidelined in the secular curriculum, indicating that the conflict between Islamic identity and citizenship education is not limited to a particular national setting (Vince, 2018). Nonetheless, the situation in Pakistan is qualitatively different as Islam has both constitutional and majoritarian status, so the conflicts between Islamic identity and GCE are on hegemonic competition instead of minority-majority relations (Ahmad, 2004, 2007, 2008)

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Volume 3, Issue 12 (2025)

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Phenomenological Approaches to Teacher Experience

Educational phenomenological research aims to shed light on life experiences to explain meanings and essences that cannot be defined in quantitative or conventional qualitative research (Peoples, 2020). The approach of transcendental phenomenology, grounded in the philosophical theories of Husserl and Moran (2012) and a methodological explanation by Moustakas (1994), focuses on a description of experiences as they become conscious in the result of rigorous procedures that set aside presumptions (Peoples, 2020). Recent phenomenological research on teacher experiences can also show that the methodology is able to expose nuances in professional life, such as motivation, satisfaction, and identity negotiation ((Martin, 2022; Wilson, 2022).

The methodological advantages of using transcendental phenomenology toward understanding the experience of ideological contradictions in teachers are that it places the first-person perspective of teachers at the centre and sets aside researchers' preconceived notions about resolving these conflicts (Peoples, 2020). This method acknowledges that lived experience has a crucial frame that can be learned through a systematic phenomenological study, and it offers a level of understanding that is impossible with other research methodologies (Martin, 2022; Wilson, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, qualitative phenomenological inquiry was used with the particular application of Transcendental Phenomenology, as developed by Moustakas (1994). The principle is consistent with the research question that concentrates on lived experiences, meanings, and essences of teachers who have to navigate through Islamic identity-GCE contradictions (Peoples, 2020). Transcendental phenomenology focuses on the description of a phenomenon, as it presents itself to consciousness through systematic steps to access the essential structures underlying experience. The Epoché of the methodology, where researcher assumptions are bracketed, was critical on our part, considering that we are Pakistan-based education researchers who must have had assumptions previously on religious-secular tensions in schooling (Moustakas, 1994).

Philosophical Paradigm

This study is based on Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, which considers knowledge to be derived from consciousness and lived experience, and not as a result of external objective reality Husserl and Moran (2012) The epistemological position asserts that essential meanings emerge by strictly describing the phenomena as they manifest themselves to subjects who are in the experience. Transcendental phenomenology understands reality appearances and essences found by utilising phenomenological reduction (Grix, 2019). The main notions used in this research are consciousness directed toward objects (intentionality), perception as the primary form of exposure to phenomena, and noema-noesis correlation, which explains the relation between what is experienced and the act of experiencing (Moustakas, 1994).

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Participants and Sampling

To determine a sample of participants, purposive criterion sampling was used to select twelve participants that fit a set of inclusion criteria (Patton, 2014): (1) had at least three years of teaching experience in elite English-medium schools in Punjab, Pakistan; (2) direct experience of implementing the GCE-related curriculum, but considered themselves practising Muslims; (3) keen interest in learning and explaining the phenomenon; (4) willing to be involved in extensive phenomenological interviews. The sample has seven female and five male teachers between the ages of 28 and 52 years, and those who are teaching in humanities and social sciences subjects in the grades of 6-12. All participants were master's degree graduates and were teaching at institutions that used either Cambridge or International Baccalaureate programs.

Data Collection

Data were collected using phenomenological interviewing through long, open-ended, conversational interactions that were intended to access lived experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Pre-interviews were used to build rapport, clarify the study's nature and objective, and discuss informed consent based on the rights of participants. The first round of interviews lasted approximately 80-90 minutes, and a follow-up round (approximately 60-70 minutes) was provided to take the discussion further on issues discovered.

In the data collection process, we employed Epoché by undertaking systematic bracketing in reflective journals, which intentionally set aside assumptions such as contradictions requiring resolution and that religious-secular conflict inevitably leads to distress.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis was based on the transcendental phenomenological approach proposed by Moustakas (1994), involving revised Van Kaam (1967) steps in three stages:

Phase 1 Phenomenological Reduction. All the interview transcripts were transcribed and a list of all the statements that were relevant to the phenomenon was created with the initial value of each statement being the same (Moustakas, 1994). The reduction and elimination methodology tested each of the horizontally made statements against two criteria: (1) does it have the content required to understand the experience? (2) Can it be abstracted and designated? The statements that fulfilled these two criteria were those that became invariant constituents. The grouping of related invariant constituents was performed into thematic groups. Each of the participants' individual textural descriptions was constructed of what was experienced: qualities, feelings, sensations, and perceptions, with verbatim examples backing up the descriptions (Van Kaam, 1967).

Phase 2: Imaginative Variation. The imaginative variation enabled us to understand how things were, how conditions, contexts, temporal-spatial structures, and intentional relationships made up the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Individual structural descriptions expressed underlying structures such as temporality (when

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

tensions were produced), spatiality (where tensions resided), materiality (physical-institutional contexts), causality (what caused tensions), and relationality (dimensions of interpersonal).

Phase 3: Synthesis. The summative description of the text was incorporated in the form of a general statement of what teachers generally experienced (Moustakas, 1994). A synthesised structural description integrated structural images of the way the experience was manifested. Finally, intuitively reflective synthesis of meanings and essences synthesises textual-structural descriptions to an essential statement where the core meanings of the phenomenon are reflected.

Validity and Reliability

Inter-subjective validity was achieved through member checking, where participants checked their respective textual-structural descriptions to determine whether they were appropriate and resonant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The documented systematic audit trails recorded the analytical processes of horizontalisation to synthesis. Epoché, rigorous journaling as a form of bracketing, was meant to set aside preconceived notions, but total bracketing is still aspirational (Moustakas, 1994). The thick description offered a rich-textual-structural description that allowed readers to determine transferability (Tracy, 2010; Tracy, 2024). Composite descriptions also validated by participants asserted that crucial meanings expressed their experiences as they went through them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

Several strategies were employed to ensure ethical considerations. The process of informed consent ensured that participants were aware of the study's purposes and how they might obtain voluntary involvement and rights to withdrawal (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Measures of confidentiality were in place, such as pseudonyms and the elimination of identifiable institution-related information (Leavy, 2022). Interview transcripts were provided to the participants and included in the final analysis after receiving approval from the participants (Flick, 2022).

FINDINGS

The transcendental phenomenological analysis demonstrated that there were five superordinate themes that identified the essential textural-structural dimensions of the experiences of a teacher who had to negotiate Islamic identity-GCE contradictions. Each theme includes what was experienced (textural elements) and how it was experienced (structural elements), shedding light on the essential meanings of the phenomenon.

Theme 1: Negotiating Sacred and Secular Pedagogies

Textural Description: According to the participants, they had a deep sense of being uncomfortable as they taught what was seen to be contrary to Islamic beliefs. One of the teachers clarified by saying, “When I teach universal human rights without qualification, something within myself opposes me, as I am aware that some rights discourses are against the Islamic laws, yet I cannot say that to my students”

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Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

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(Participant 4). This uneasiness presented itself in the form of a visceral, embodied tension - something tightening in the chest, the lack of fluency in voice, and careful word selection to avoid explicit endorsement of secular systems. Teachers said that they felt divided between teaching and their religious duties, that lessons on gender equality, LGBT rights, and secular democracy also became mandatory, and that they had to temporarily deny their Islamic identity.

Participant 7 said, “Global citizenship asks me to educate about the fact that all religions are equally true paths to the truth, but my religion, Islam, is the last one to be revealed, as I am a Muslim. What should I do about teaching pluralism when my religion asserts truth?” The existential aspect of negotiating sacred-secular pedagogies, such as not only the technical implementation of curriculum but also its basic questions about truth, authority, and authenticity, is summarised in this question.

Structural Description: Temporally, contradictions were heightened at certain points of the curriculum: units on human rights, content on religious pluralism, and analysis of Western political philosophy. Tensions were spatially concentrated in the classroom areas in the form of institutional surveillance (administrators, parents, and students) that made the process of negotiations on the part of teachers’ public and consequential. Relationally, the participants felt isolated and could hardly find people with whom they could talk openly about contradictions. The experience organisation entailed never-ending alertness, continuously watching what could and could not be uttered, and establishing labour-intensive pedagogical tasks.

Theme 2: Experiencing Identity Fragmentation

Textural Description: Teachers explained their professional identity as fracturing into seemingly incompatible elements when occupying contradictory ideological worlds. Participant 2 articulated this as follows.

> I consider myself to be two individuals. I am confident in my beliefs and secure in Islamic knowledge. Classroom instruction in the foreign curriculum requires me to be portrayed as an open-minded global citizen who questions everything including religion. The two personalities do not merge; they are positioned parallel to one another, and the transition between the two is jarring.

This dispersion creates inauthenticity and fraudulence. Participant 9 admitted that she felt like a hypocrite when she taught GCE concepts with such energy, even though she personally doubted it because of her religious beliefs. A number of teachers stated that they did not want to enter a more profound commitment to either Islamic scholarship or critical reading of the GCE to avoid contributing to internal contradictions, which seems to be a defensive mechanism but resulted in professional-spiritual stagnation.

Structural Description: Identity fragmentation occurred both in space and time. Teachers reported a feeling of wholeness in religious spheres (mosques and Islamic study groups) and fragmentation in the workplace. The institutional character that facilitated fragmentation was the institutional division of religious and professional spheres of life, where elite schools encouraged explicit Islamic discourse, except in

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Volume 3, Issue 12 (2025)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

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specific Religious Studies lessons. Fragmentation occurs due to incompatible identity demands and a lack of institutional and communal resources of integration.

Theme 3: Embodying Dual Consciousness

Textural Description: In addition to fragmentation, teachers also evolved what some of them called a dual consciousness that allows one to have conflicting commitments at once yet lacks the capacity to synthesise them. According to Participant 11, he learned to think in parallel. "One aspect of me follows the GCE framework, and I have given up making attempts to reconcile the Islamic framework and the GCE framework. This twin consciousness was less one of decision and more of the tolerance to ambiguity."

This seems to be a pragmatic response to ambiguity that contradictions would always remain.

According to the teachers, this consciousness was a burden and liberation. Participant 5 observed, "I was relieved after I had come to terms with the fact that I could not solve everything. However, I also believe that this is a way in which I lost integrity." The dual consciousness allowed pedagogical functionality, which allowed a teacher to be both successful in delivering the GCE curriculum and maintaining individual Islamic commitment, but generated unending queries about loyalty and ultimate fidelity.

Structural Description: Dual consciousness is a form of temporal coping strategy that was acquired over years of teaching. Younger teachers (1-3 years of experience) were those who showed acute distress with the intention to be resolved, whereas those who showed acceptance of being unresolved were teachers who had experience (10 years or more experience). Spatially, the dual consciousness mandated the maintenance of the strict boundaries of religious life on the one hand and the performance of work in the visible world as follows. This awareness focused on practical usefulness and not ideological significance, and placed pedagogical efficiency and not ideological purity.

Theme 4: Navigating Institutional Pressures

Textural Description: Teachers were subject to contradictions not in their internal psychological conditions but in their institutional situations, which required particular performances. Participant 3 described:

> The school sells itself to elite class parents as an institution that builds competitive graduates in the world market. When I indicate that we should study Western values in some way critically rather than blindly embrace them, the administration sends me signals that it is not appropriate. They desire Islam as a cultural decoration, but not as an alternative epistemology.

The institutional pressures were in the shape of curriculum requirements, expectations by the administrators, parental demands, and examination requirements. Teachers were torn apart by institutional pressures of GCE delivery into schools and the needs of the wider Pakistani society to maintain Islamic identity.

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Volume 3, Issue 12 (2025)

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Print ISSN 3007-3189

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Structural Description: Institutionally, the contradictions are organised in terms of the location of the learning institutions in the Pakistani learning market. Against the background of the international standard of education entailing a certain level of GCE performance, these institutions distinguish themselves. Economically, schools are financially stable based on their reputation for producing globally mobile graduates and the creation of structural pressure against too deep an integration of Islamic-GCE interference that could undermine marketability. In relation, the teacher was placed in an inferior position in hierarchies which offered little autonomy to oppose the requirements of the curricula.

Theme 5: Transforming Through Dialectical Engagement

Textural Description: Narratives of contradiction were created by some teachers despite distress to generate deeper insights into both systems of Islamic religion and GCE. Participant 8 commented,' The tension made me take the study of Islamic philosophy more seriously and critically read GCE literature and not carry along with it blindly. This struggle has given me intellectual strength." The teachers who worked to turn contradictions into dialectical dialogue stated that they had developed sophisticated positions transcending simple Islamic-secular binaries and saw internal diversity through both traditions.

According to participant 12,

> I now teach students that Islamic religion and being a global citizen do not have to be foes. Islam is visionary and interested in justice and environmental security. The issue is not a matter of choosing either Islam or global citizenship, but what it actually means to be a global citizen in Islamic eyes.

Structural Description: The transformation was a result of long-standing temporal interaction, which usually took five or more years of constant consideration. This required encouraging relational conditions, especially for mentors or coworkers who confirmed integrative strategies. Spatially, the transformation was often necessary in search of materials outside the institutional scope, such as participation in workshops, involvement in online communities, or taking up graduate degrees, to find synthesis frameworks not present in schools.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Textural-Structural Findings

The textural-structural descriptions in the composite mode disclose the essence of the experiences of teachers, as they are in a condition of continuous ontological tension, the state of experiencing ambivalent ideological commitments in the teacher that cannot be fully resolved (Boni & Calabuig, 2017). This essence is revealed in what phenomenological analysis illuminates as pedagogical ambivalence, not as a form of indecisiveness, but as a form of complex consciousness containing contradictory truths concurrently. The practice of teachers has shown that the tensions of Islamic identity-GCE are not simply cognitive dissonances to be eliminated on a rational basis, but existential circumstances in the context of which educators live their professional worlds (Peoples, 2020).

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The results indicate that temporality serves as the core of experiences of contradictions. The development of teachers is naturally based on acute distress in favour of resolution, which is followed by the development of the understanding that acceptance is less significant, accompanied by contradictions that change consciousness over time (Martin, 2022). Contradictions are not uniformly distributed spatially but tend to congregate around certain institutional places of liminality between Pakistani religious culture and transnational secular modernity elite schools. In the relations, the alienation of teachers emphasises the fact that contradictions are not subjected to communal processing spaces; they have privatised what are essentially social-political contradictions exist.

Connection to Existing Literature

The findings advance the research on GCE tensions because they reveal that contradictions do not just exist at the policy or curriculum levels, as they get into the experiential consciousness of teachers (Boni & Calabuig, 2017). As much literature has recognised the inherent contradictions of GCE in terms of their productive potential, this paper takes on the phenomenological account of living these contradictions, which is the embodied discomfort, identity fragmentation, and constant vigilance teachers experience as a result (Boni & Calabuig, 2017). Pedagogical ambivalence as a reality substantiates theoretical claims that contradictions should be seen as characteristics of the structure of GCE, and not as failures in implementation, but phenomenological research indicates that these structural characteristics turn into personal burdens to individual educators.

The results align with the literature on the same topic, which records different perceptions of Muslim teachers on GCE based on the institutional sector (Muhammad, 2016; Pasha, 2022; Shar, 2024). The teachers in this paper, who have been teaching in international curriculum schools of elite status, show the exact form in which contradictions occur in institutions that are dedicated to providing global competitiveness yet are functioning in a Muslim majority situation. This work has extended the existing knowledge by showing that even rationally accepting teachers of GCE models experience visceral resistance at embodied levels, indicating that cognitive acceptance does not diminish existential-emotional levels of contradiction.

The dual consciousness theme is also similar to the idea of two types of consciousness in postcolonial theory: a double consciousness where an object of colonialism simultaneously takes on both the role of the colonialist and that of the colonised. In elite schools in Pakistan, the roles of teachers have a similar space, as they represent both Western educational models and Islamic identity simultaneously, which perpetuates colonial relationships even in the context of postcolonial observation. Nevertheless, transformative possibilities are also found in this study because some of the teachers go beyond binary thinking to form integrative structures, and the literature indicates that productive involvement in contradictions can produce new syntheses (Boni & Calabuig, 2017).

A break with regard to the available literature is seen in the resolution. Although optional models of Islamic citizenship education offer an alternative to Western GCE, this is not often the case for the teachers in this study. Rather, the majority of them live in ambiguity eternally, implying that the theoretical construct might lack practical

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

representation in pedagogy (Muhammad, 2019). The discrepancy between the academic prescriptions and phenomenological experiences of teachers should be considered in the further reform of citizenship education (Pasha, 2015, 2022).

Implications

Theoretically, this paper contributes to the phenomenological knowledge of ideological contradictions in experience as opposed to concepts and reveals the idea of how contradictions form experiential aspects of professional identity among teachers. The results call into question rationalist views that ideological contradictions need or can be resolved in favour of learning to live in contradiction with integrity as a valid, although challenging, professional position (Peoples, 2020).

In practical terms, the results suggest that there is an urgent necessity to establish communal areas in which teachers will be able to individually vent their Islamic identity-GCE tensions without being supervised or judged by the institution. Elite schools in Pakistan are advised to appreciate that when it requires a GCE application without resolving the experiential contradictions of teachers, chances of creating unsustainable pedagogic situations arise. Teacher education programs also need to introduce prospective teachers to ideological complexity instead of representing teaching as ideologically neutral as a technical practice. Professional development opportunities must be provided with the inclusion of the ability to enter into critical interaction with both Islamic and GCE frameworks, but not be uncritically adapted to either of them.

The study is methodologically valuable, as it contains evidence of the applicability of transcendental phenomenology to education studies to help shed light on the subjective aspects of teaching that are not fully accessible to surveys or standard interviews. The results indicate an increased use of phenomenological approaches in understanding teachers lived experiences in education reforms, with particular reference to reforms of ideologically contentious content.

Professionally and personally, the process of this research changed our perception of citizenship education in Pakistan. Our involvement in Epoché involved facing the assumptions we made about ourselves that contradictions are issues that must be resolved. The analysis indicated that teachers who moved between contradictions through thoughtful and integrity citizenship work are exercising the type(s) of education that may be more beneficial than the Islamic, Western one in isolation–education—mediation between conflicting truth claims.

Limitations

The sample of this study was suitable for phenomenological research, but it did not have external validity when it came to other educational settings, since it consisted of teachers working in elite English-medium schools only in Punjab. Participants were chosen based on their familiarity with identity contradictions and their capacity to describe them; educators who could be oblivious or unconcerned with identity contradictions were not investigated. Although we attempted hard not to be influenced by Epoché, we could not manage to absolutely bracket our assumptions as a Pakistani education researcher, which may have affected the interpretation of the data. Research on the contradictions between Islamic identity and GCE might have imposed binary

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framing unintentionally instead of addressing the internal plurality of identities. Conditional factors are the historical-political realities of Pakistan per se; the experience of contextual variations may not be similar in other Islam-majority and non-Muslim contexts.

Future Research Directions

The challenge in the Islamic identity-GCE contradictions directly passed on by teachers of elite schools and on to students in the schools should be examined in future phenomenological studies. Comparative phenomenological research on teachers of religious, national public, and elite private schools would help to understand the ways in which ideological contradictions are formed by institutional contexts. A longitudinal phenomenological study that follows the experience of teachers over their career spans would enhance the sense of how contradiction navigation becomes over time. Finally, phenomenological studies on the experience of teachers who manage to effectively develop integrative frameworks would shed light on opportunities to overcome binary thinking in terms of Islamic and secular thinking.

CONCLUSION

It was a transcendental phenomenological exploration of the way in which teachers in Pakistan's elite schools became caught in a complication between Islamic identity education and global citizen education. In a systematic phenomenological examination, five key themes were identified: negotiating sacred and secular pedagogies, experiencing identity fragmentation, embodying dual consciousness, navigating institutional pressures and transforming through dialectical engagement. These themes serve to highlight the essence of the phenomenon, which is that teachers exist in a condition of ontological tension, that is, they occupy opposing ideological loci that are their professional lifeworlds. The paper shows that the Islamic identity-GCE inconsistencies were not simple cognitive issues but rather reflected the existential conditions that need to be negotiated in the long run.

The implications of these findings go beyond studies on the personal well-being of a particular teacher to some of the basic questions concerning the purpose of citizenship education in relation to the Muslim dominant contexts. When GCE programs systematically generate inconsistencies that cannot be resolved by the teacher, the question one raises will be whether this type of education is reproducing colonialism, imposing its Western frameworks without meaningful adaptation on Pakistani students. However, the research also necessarily shows promising directions: Teachers who turn contradictions into dialogue are able to build more advanced insights beyond the simplistic binaries, which can serve as a model to the students. The elements of critical citizenship mean to operate in complexity with integrity and not to find pseudo-certainty.

The future research should employ phenomenological approach regarding student experiences, conduct studies on teachers of various institutions, and seek the pathways of integrative consciousness that will respect both Islamic and cosmopolitan openness. This question has changed how we see the role of citizen education by showing that a teacher who lives in ideological paradoxes with care can teach an

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

effective lesson of citizenship, teaching that there is no single truth, plural truths need to be respected, and cannot be forcefully resolved.

The essence found in this phenomenological exploration indicates that the lived space between Islamic identity and being a global citizen, rather than symptomatic of pedagogical failure, is precisely the terrain upon which an authentic education of complex citizenship takes place—an education, education not for ideological purity but for the critical wisdom to dwell productively within irresolution.

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