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Unveiling Execution Challenges to Life Skills Practices and its Way Forward: A Phenomenological Insight of Prospective Teachers at Universities of South Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The present study was envisioned to unveil the challenges in executing life skills encountered by prospective teachers in classroom and its way forward. The study applied phenomenological approach for investigating the problem from the respondents. A total of 28 prospective teachers were interviewed from three public sector universities located in South Punjab who were currently enrolled in teacher education programs under Department of Education of these universities. The respondents were selected based on purposive sampling technique. The data for the study were collected based on convenient sampling basis. For data collection, semi-structured interview guide was prepared and used. The interview instrument was tested before using in the field for data collection. Thematic analysis method was applied for analysis of the data. Based on analysis, five important themes emerged as main challenges regarding the practices of life skills implementation in teacher education departments of the public sector universities. These included, 1) lack of awareness, 2) time barriers and constraint, 3) lack of mechanism, 4) attitude restriction and 5) lack of supportive learning environment. The study results give pertinent information to management and leadership of teacher education institutions about the challenges faced by prospective teachers in learning and practicing the life skills and how to effectively implement these skills through classroom instruction.

1. Introduction

Life skills refer to the various important abilities that people need to learn and practice in life to function effectively in different walks of life (Hvalby et al., 2024). These skills include the ability to communicate effectively, to solve problems, to think critically, to adapt with situation and to use digital resources and tools effectively for personal and professional purposes, to lead and manage teams and to show creativity and be innovative (Camire, 2023). In the last many years, several

countries around the world including Pakistan have made numerous efforts for the improvement of the teacher education and quality of teaching practices. However, still the teacher education practices in Pakistan are fraught with many challenges among which, one of the prominent challenges has been the effective integration and implementation of life skills teaching practices (Hasrat et al., 2024).

The education policy of Pakistan 2009 strongly emphasized on the inclusion and practice of life skills teaching through the secondary education in the country. The main aim of the policy was to integrate life skills teaching that covered various important themes like making the learners aware about the critical place of environment, human rights, population education and making the curriculum of the teacher education program culturally and socially relevant through adopting sustainable education approaches (Jamil et al., 2024). On the other hand, the implementation of the much coveted life skills teaching practices at secondary level have not been brought at par with the curriculum goals. This increased deviation from the targeted goal of implementation and institutionalization of life skills teaching practices at the classroom instruction level have been seen by current researchers and practitioners with much concern (Maqsood et al., 2022).

Although at the secondary level, teacher education system of Pakistan the integration of the life skills teaching practices had been adopted with much enthusiasm and motivation at the policy making level (Ansari, 2025). The civil society organization and forums had been advocating and supporting the agenda of life skills teaching and learning activity initiation with seriousness. The same was fortified by giving under the ambit of the provincial education set up as after the 18th amendment, education has been recognized as the provincial subject and life skills education was declared to be the essential part of the provincial educational endeavors (Ansari, 2024).

Although under the current practices of teacher education system in Pakistan, at the provincial level, the guidelines and goals regarding the inclusion and implementation of life skills educational initiatives are clearly drafted and recognized, however, the implementation of the guideline policy matters does not correlate with the practical implementation of these skills in the instructional practices (Asal et al., 2024). According to some of the teacher education researchers, one of the major reasons behind this state of affairs is the lack of motivation and awareness among the teachers regarding the teaching of life skills education. There is a gap in the theory and practice of the life skills curriculum in the country in the existing teacher education system of the country. The life skills initiatives have generally been included in the co-curricular activities of the educational institutions. However, despite this, there are reports about insufficient effort on the part of the management and administration of the schools to integrate the concepts of life skills in the operational curriculum in practical form (Zamir et al., 2024).

Teaching of life skills needs the application of critical and innovative instructional methods which are interactive by nature and inclusive in approach (Sharma, 2026). However, it has been observed by researchers that teachers' own ability and willingness to apply the relevant pedagogies related to life skills teaching is lacking (Darlington-Bernard et al., 2023). Most of the existing teaching approaches in Pakistani education system are based on traditional pedagogical approaches that stresses on memorization of facts and information rather than understanding it and relating it to life experiences in a reflective and meaningful manner (Ahmed et al., 2024). Researchers have suggested that effective practice of life skills can be possible if teachers are allowed and encouraged to use interactive teaching methods and by equipping the learners with the required skill and potentials to enable them to face the challenges confidently. In the current situation, there

is no proper method and framework for integrating and practicing the life skills through teacher education program in the country (Sadiq et al., 2026).

There is a lack of strong connection between theory and practice of implementing the life skills instruction practices which has intensified due to the poor evaluation system that lacks the essential quality parameters to effectively teach and assess life skills learning among students. This has been further aggravated by the poor monitoring issues in the teacher education practices in Pakistan. Since the nature of the life skills is subjective, hence it creates more challenges for the management of teacher education for assessing the life skills teaching practices effectively. The existing evaluation system fails to assess the level of development and learning of students about the life skills acquisitions. Alongside, in classroom instruction, the skill related practices are ignored by teachers as these concepts are not included in the timetable of the schools. Scholars have highlighted the need for using multiple assessment methods for examining life skills learning among students which had so far been overlooked.

The concept of teaching of life skills practices stems from experiential and social observation theories of learning which emphasize on practical engagement and exploration for learners rather than making them passive receiver of information. These theories explain that effective learning occurs on the basis of learning by doing. These approaches allow the learners to feel personally empowered and involved (Isaksen et al., 2025). The self-determination theory also emphasizes on the importance of using methods which add to the motivation of learners in the learning process. The cognitive learning perspectives of teaching and learning also gives the clear direction about the key role of engagement, critical thinking, exploration and participation in the learning process rather than merely collecting information about facts (Zimmermann & Tomczyk, 2025).

The current Pakistani teacher training programs do not effectively focus on the life skills acquisition for equipping the future teachers with these skills by integrating them in the formal curriculum and instructional practices (Farooq & Alyana, 2025). Resultantly, most of the teachers have been found to have insufficient knowledge about the different interactive pedagogical practices to cultivate the essential skills among students through classroom teaching and learning environment (Ansari, 2025). The same problem is exacerbated by resource constraints such as insufficient fund and time and non-availability of trained teachers. There is a lack of fund for teacher training, material collection and distribution, technology adoption and structuring the classroom learning aids. These hurdles have posed pressure and challenges to teachers for effective integration of the life skills into the instructional process (Shuaib et al., 2024).

The lack of parental ownership of the skill based education, the alternative pressure of cultural and society norm has also shaped the level of work and its stress on the educational institutions regarding the life skills education in Pakistani context (Ahmed et al., 2024). There has been strong opposition to the changes and innovation inside the educational practices and the partners in education such as communities and parents have always looked at the educational institutions from traditional lens. However, for the effective and impacting role of life skill instruction, there is a need of powerful teaching that underscores the cultural sensitiveness of the society, choices of learners, and contextual realities thus making the life skills instruction flexible enough to adapt to the demands of the varying communities (Jamil et al., 2024). As stated that there has been strong resistance to changes and innovation which has affected the power of professionalism in instruction especially relating to teaching of life skills. Moreover, another hurdle has been the lack of acceptance on the part of the traditional instructors to use contemporary instructional practices and display of rigid attitude for the use of alternative pedagogical tools and methods. This strong

resistance to innovations in the teacher education practices from teachers, management and policy makers' side has further cemented the resistive forces to accept the integration of life skills teaching practices (Ansari, 2025).

Studies have indicated that demonstration of professional behavior of teachers such as cooperation, giving effective and practicable feedback to students is one of the essential principles of professionalism in teacher education (Khatoon, 2025). It has been observed that teachers fail to play their professional roles due to different constraints such as workload, stress of duty, low motivation and extra duties which affect their motivation towards giving attention to sustainability practices. It is important for teachers to focus on teaching of life skills, however, in many cases, teachers have been found to losing ground in maintaining balance between the targets of organizations and the policy focus about inclusion of life skills teaching as an essential part of teacher education programs (Rohera & Birla, 2024).

The personal attitudes and willingness on the part of learners towards being prepared for the examination rather than being active involvement in the learning process has also contributed towards the poor learning of life skills among them (Zimmermann & Tomczyk, 2025). The teachers use conventional methods of instruction which emphasizes on memorization of isolated facts rather than conceptual clarity and understanding. This has ultimately led to the poor and demotivating learning atmosphere in schools (Yushehira et al., 2025). Researchers have further pinpointed about the ineffective teacher training environment where the main focus is on discussing disjointed theoretical explanation of facts rather than incorporating a live and critical learning environment for skills enhancement for trainee teachers through reflective sessions, creative ideas sharing, innovation and evaluative discussion and feedback (Isaken et al., 2025; Jamil et al., 2024).

1.1 Research Gap

In the last decades, the system of teacher education practices worldwide has been undergoing comprehensive transformation like changing from adopting lectures and memorizing the facts as a method of instruction in teacher education to challenging the beliefs of the teachers and student teachers to motivate them to adopt creative and innovative ways for teaching and learning life skills (Shuaib et al., 2024). However, to the contrary, the current teacher education system in Pakistan has been found to clearly lacking the ability and potential to provide critical awareness to its teacher educators regarding adopting critical pedagogies and methodologies about teaching and learning of life skills practices (Zamir et al., 2024). Recent studies have demonstrated that teacher education system of Pakistan extensively lacks the power and ability to train its teacher educators to understand about the new shift from conventional into the contemporary method for implementation of life skills practices. Instead the system lacks the ability to motivate the teachers towards the utilization of instruction as a platform for using latest approaches to teach life skills to the prospective teachers. This lack of practical activity in the classroom instructional processes has further cemented and widened the gap between the policy directive regarding life skills teaching and learning practices in teacher education institutions and its actual implementation in the classroom context (Jamil et al., 2025).

1.2 Problem Statement

The present study was conducted to unveil execution challenges to life skills practices and its way forward through phenomenological insights of prospective teachers at universities. The existing

literature on life skills teaching practices implementation in Pakistani teacher education is disperse and unclear which warrants for further investigations. There is less clarity about how the teaching of life skills has become a challenging process despite the clear policy directives (Ahmad et al., 2024; Ansari, 2024). This current study bridges this gap in the current body of knowledge in the context of teacher education programs of Pakistan especially in universities where prospective teachers are trained and guided for their future roles as professional teachers of schools. The study specifically explores the insights of the prospective teachers enrolled in the teacher education department of the public sectors universities about the challenges in the effective implementation of life skills practices.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study was conducted to meet the following objectives.

1. To explore the perceptions of prospective teachers about challenges in implementation of life skills practices in universities.
2. To explore the perceptions of prospective teachers about the key strategies for successful implementation of life skills practices in universities.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the challenges that you face while teaching life skills practices in your class?
2. How these challenges influence your learning of life skills practices in your class?
3. What do you suggest for effective teaching of life skills practices in your class?

1.5 Method and Materials

This study used a phenomenological qualitative research method to investigate the perspectives of prospective teachers of public sector in South Punjab about the challenges they face in implementing life skills practices in classroom context. This method was suitable in this study as the aim of the research was to explore the lived experience, perception and context based reality related towards the implementation of life skills practices and how it was integrated and implemented in the teacher education courses of public sector universities.

The study was based on the interpretivist perspective. Through this lens, the research study sought deeper and comprehensive understanding of how the prospective teachers constructed meaning out of their experiences of implementation of life skills practices and what challenges did they face regarding the life skills practices. A phenomenology as a paradigm and design helps in capturing the shared experience of the participants about the process of implementing life skills practices.

1.5.1 Locale of Research

The study was conducted in the Department of Education of public sector universities of South Punjab. The same universities run teacher education courses like BS Education, B.Ed.(Honors), MA Education and so on. It is believed that these programs may contain themes on life skills practices and the prospective teachers who graduate these programs are expected to have learned and developed the life skills as per the national education policy of Pakistan.

1.5.2 Population and Sample

The target population of the research study were all the prospective teachers who were enrolled in the Department of Education of all the public sector universities of South Punjab. The main purpose was the easy accessibility to the prospective teachers, easy data collection and similar nature of courses of teacher education taught in these universities. The prospective teachers were selected on the basis of purposive sampling as this approach was suitable to be applied for selecting those respondents who had experiences of implementation of the life skills practices in the Department of Education of the targeted universities. Furthermore, respondents were approached by using the convenient sampling technique. This type of sample approach allows the researchers to have easy access to the respondents based on their special knowledge and experience of the phenomena to participate in the study (Creswell, 2011). Thus, initially, all the prospective teachers enrolled in the Department of Education of the targeted universities were targeted as a sample. In a qualitative study a sample of fifteen to 15 to 25 is considered acceptable as a rule of thumb until the data saturation was reached. In this study, in total the researchers interviewed twenty-eight (28) respondents (prospective teachers) from three universities. Further interviews were discontinued due to lack of consent from the targeted population of the selected universities.

1.5.3 Instrumentation

The researchers used semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool for exploring the perception, experience and hurdles that respondents faced while related to the implementation of life skills practices. For this purpose, an interview protocol was designed and used for data collection. The interview protocol allowed the researcher easy and flexible access for probing the answers from the prospective teachers about their experience with life skills practices. The questions centered upon the challenges to implementation of life skills practices and the suggesting ways for implementing the life skills practices.

The reliability and validity of the interview questions were checked through expert judgement and pilot testing. For this purpose, two PhD qualified teachers from the field of teacher education were engaged to assess the questions and its suitability. Based on their feedback the interview protocol was finalized. Moreover, a mock interview was also conducted with two teacher educators to check the relevancy, dependability and suitability of the research instrument to make it credible for using it in the field.

1.5.4 Data Collection

The researchers conducted data collection in the field after finalizing and determining the research instrument and its suitability for conducting interviews from the teachers. Before going for interviews, the researchers contacted the management of the department to get permission to access the prospective teachers of Department of Education for briefing them about the purpose of the study. The management of the departments responded positively and allowed to access the study participants to get their willingness to participate in the study.

The participants were approached on different timings through personal visits to the universities. They were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent to participate through giving interviews. The response was partially positive as some did not show willingness to give interviews on personal ground. Hence, in each university, those prospective teachers were

interviewed who were available and willing to participate in the interview. The process of interview was made easy, relaxing and respondent oriented as the researchers did not show any arbitrary actions to interfere in the process of interview. The participants were given full freedom to share their views and experience regarding the issues they faced while implementing the life skills practices. The researchers recorded the responses in the form of filed notes and voice recording in a mobile voice recorder. For this purpose, special permission was taken from the respondent. They were taken into confidence that the collected views will be used only for research purpose and kept as confidential and will not be shared with others. Moreover, they were allowed to withdraw from the process of participation any time they liked as a principle of epoche in a phenomenological investigation process. The interview sessions generally lasted for 20 to 30 minutes.

1.5.5 Analysis of Data

The recorded interview data were later on transcribed and folded into safe folder. The analysis was done using the thematic analysis method of Braun and Clarke (2006) who prescribed six important phases for the process of qualitative data analysis. These phases include transcribing the data, getting familiar with the data, creating codes and categorizing them into related chunks of information, develop themes and generating report. Keeping in view these, in the first phase we transcribed the data which was recorded in written notes form. For this purpose, we read and reread the noted information from the interviews as well as listened to the recorded interviews several times. Based on this exercise, we transcribed all the interviews in a legible and clear manner. In the next stage, we reviewed the transcriptions many times and identified several patterns of information. This was necessary to see the relationship between the patterns and select important piece of information. This was followed by the finding of codes which were identified during the process of reviewing the transcriptions. The selected codes were categorized into related themes which was followed by reviewing the categorized themes and transforming them into final themes. This process was a bit lengthy as the categorized themes were reviewed several times and finally made ready for naming them based on the nature of the content that they contained of. Lastly, the final themes were generated after a rigorous process of analysis.

1.6 Study Results

On the basis of the analysis of the qualitative data collected through interviews from the prospective teachers, 5 major themes emerged which were related to the prospective teachers' live experiences with the implementation of the life skills practices. These themes were 1) lack of awareness, 2) time barriers and constraint, 3) lack of mechanism, 4) attitude restriction and 5) lack of supportive learning environment.

1.6.1 Lack of Awareness

It was discovered that prospective teachers were not properly aware about the policy matters and the importance of life skills practices. They did not even know about the implementation procedures for the learning and application of life skills. According to majority of the prospective teachers, they did not have proper orientation about the importance and practice of life skills.

While expressing about the strategies and effective implementation of the life skill practices, a female prospective teacher stated that.

“ ummm....., you know....I have no idea of life skills....but you have asked the question about the life skills..... We do not have receive any awareness about the life skills and their application or practice in life. I think, these life skills need to be given high importance in our educational practices as they carry much importance. You know.....ummm.....it is difficult for me to give you clear idea about life skills.....ummm...we are taught about the courses and preparation for the courses only....no such orientation is given about life skills.....umm...I have clear idea of it.....but I know that skills are important in life.....ummmm...you know....these skills are needed in the job market.....but I don't know which are included in life skills.....we need to learn them if we want to apply them correctly”. (S24)

Some of the male prospective teachers also narrated in the interviews that they did not have proper understanding of the life skills. They suggested that there need to be support from the teachers' side about them and how to apply them in different spheres of life. So, in view of most of the prospective teachers, the implementation process of the life skills teaching and learning need to have proper support from the management and learners must be clearly guided how to learn about them and apply them in life.

A prospective teacher narrated while expressing her views about new trends about the different life skills and its application in life domains.

The teacher shared here views that.

“Actually the life skills need to be properly included in the syllabus and properly taught if they are very much important. However, ummm.....I know....there is no such think about life skills in the syllabus.....You know.....emm...just one or two skills ate theoretically taught which is not useful....there is no clarity how these skills are acquired and practiced in life.....emmm....even we do not see teachers demonstrating them...umm...you know....it is very rare....so generally students don't have any idea about the life skills.....you know the main emphasis is on theoretical tasks life memorizing facts and no practical knowledge about the important life skills and their implementation in the form of clear practice”. (S17)

1.6.2 Time Constraints

Lack of proper time was found as the chief barrier in view of the majority of the prospective teachers during the interviews. It was found during the interviews that most of the teachers had less time for practicing life skills in classroom environment as the teachers were fully occupied with the theoretical lectures and instruction. It was further discovered that the prospective teachers did not find any one giving proper attention to inclusion of life skills during the classroom lectures and teaching of concept was the main idea.

Explaining this grim situation, one of the teachers narrated.

“I think teachers are not ready to include these life skills in their courses. emmm.... They need more time which they don't have at the moment. Most of the teachers avoid giving extra time for practice and mostly reply on giving lectures on course content. ummmm....so, I think..... it is very

difficult to give additional time for practicing these skills in classroom context". (S, 14)

Narrating this situation, most of the prospective teachers were of the opinion that they were not given enough time in the class to identify life skills related to the specific course and apply them in practical situations. However, interestingly, it was found that all the teachers placed high emphasis on life skills and its importance in their lectures.

This situation was clearly stated by a prospective teacher while giving feedback about the needed steps to be taken for proper implementation of life. The teacher placed emphasis on it by sharing the following points in his own words.

"emmm....I think.....it is very hard to talk about the life skills as there is no such activity through which these skills are taught....you know.....ummmm....the syllabus does not have such skills.....the study is tough as we have to prepare for examination and course is very long....emmm....hence there is not time for life skills learning. umm...there is a need for clear time table for including these in classroom activity ". (S6)

1.6.3 Lack of Mechanisms

The prospective teachers were mostly of the opinion that there were no clear procedures of comprehensive mechanisms for teaching and practicing the desired life skills during the classroom teaching time. They expressed it with disappointment that the teachers merely delivered long session lectures on different courses but there was no mentioning of the important life skills which are mostly wanted in the present job industry.

It was discovered that students were just given theoretical information and not practical skills learning motivation or preparation during the classroom interaction. According to majority of the prospective teachers, there were no clear methods or mechanisms in place about the implementation of the life skills. They narrated that the main method was course delivery as much as possible with heavy emphasis on grades ignoring the important aspects of actively involving students in the learning process about life skills.

Talking about this situation, one of the prospective teachers stated.

"you know..... emmm.....we actually do just memorizing of the given content from teachers' side. There is no active support or explanation about how and where to use the content. so..... ummmmm...we the teachers do not share any method through which we could easily apply the newly learned material in practical life situation., however, ummmm...in very few cases....we make attempts to learn about the life skills and their relevance in the different co-curricular activities " (S09)

Most of the prospective teachers were of the opinion that there was no mechanism or procedure in effectively implementing the life skills in practical life situations. Stating about this situation, one of the teachers said.

“ ummm.....not at all....you know..emmmm.... there is no proper method or way to teach or create environment to practice different life skills. Teachers have no clear idea about this. May be.....emmmm...they have no mechanism in place to teach students how to practice it. If you ask.....I am fully satisfied with the current methods....ummm....there is a need to proper method and ways to implement it ” (S07)

During the interviews, it was found that in view of the prospective teachers, the life skills may be easily learned and practiced if the teachers create an environment and use proper applicable methods and mechanism for learning and practicing them. They looked more concerned about the lack of proper mechanisms for implementation of life skills.

Stating about this situation, one of the prospective teachers narrated his views.

“To me there need to have various activities in the classroom for learning and practicing different life skills. ummm.....but.....we haven't seen these being practiced as an activities as there is not proper procedure of mechanisms in place for this purpose. emmm....you know....mostly teachers rely on delivering lectures to students rather than practically guiding them about life skills designing useful activities. So....emmm...I believe.....there need to be proper quality standards and mechanisms for practicing these life skills.” (S22)

1.5.4 Attitudinal Restrictions

The interviews revealed that in view of most of the prospective teachers there was no attempt to incorporate the life skills in the classroom instructional practices by the teachers. They expressed it with a sad mode and narrated that the attitudes of teachers towards this important aspect of teaching and implementing life skills was missing altogether.

Most of the prospective teachers looked concerned as they shared their views about the choices of teachers regarding the life skills practices and its implementation. They were of the view, it was not useful and needed change from mere theory to practice.

One of the teachers narrated the situation in these words.

“ ummm.....you see.....you ask me this.,....emmm..... but I know it is difficult and challenging to incorporate the life skills in the day to day activities, however, a positive attempt on the part of the teachers may facilitate the way towards creating a culture slowly where the life skills are identified, chosen and practiced in the real classroom context.” (S24)

However, most of them were of the view that these could easily be not incorporated in the day to day teaching practices but also actively learned. However, according to them the teachers lacked the choices to provide clear guidance, support and feedback about these. Hence, most of the prospective teachers looked demotivated and less hopeful.

Narrating this situation, one of the prospective teachers stated.

“there are no practices of life skills in the classroom...you know....ummm...there is only theoretical teaching....ummm....it is not useful.....however...it have found teachers like it....emmm.....you know...even teachers do not clearly provide feedback on the taught courses....there are only lectures and listening and noting down the information which to me seems not useful....emmmm....I think there is a need to new change in teaching and life skills need to be taught with flexibility and restrictions need to be removed”. (S25)

1.6.5 Lack of Supportive Atmosphere

The prospective teachers mostly opined that they were not satisfied with the process of life skills practices as there was lack of proper supportive learning environment in the classroom when it came to the learning and practice of life skills. According to the prospective teachers, there was a clear lack of proper space and motivation from teachers’ side which in their view was mostly necessary.

Narrating this situation, one of the teachers said.

“ummm.....it is very sad.....there is lack of support.....but I think the life skills practice needs more space and time for proper learning implementation in classroom context. umm.....you know...it is a practical task.....but the classroom learning is mostly theory driven.....ummm....so I think.....ummmm....there is a need to include it permanently in the allied curricular activities to provide learning more space to practice.....that space is generally less available in a classroom...hence, the learners may be given chances to learn and practice life skills through sports activities....

Majority of the teachers narrated that they were not provided with proper space in the classroom and did not receive any encouragement to practice life skills. There was a clear lack of clear instruction on the part of teachers about the life skills implementation during the classroom teaching. According to them, even the instructional material was not engaging and motivating.

Explaining this situation, one of the prospective teacher said.

“ umm.....I think there is a need to provide indoor games facilities to students and include the life skills in these activities apart of limited classroom context which is generally less supportive. Umm....I think.... It is easy but time taking..... however, I think.....there is no such support from instructor side about focusing the life skill enhancement of the learners.” (S20)

Suggestions for Improvement

The prospective teachers forwarded some important suggestions as its way forward for effective implementation of the life skills practices in the teacher education centers of the universities. Majority of them viewed the current system unfavorable for learning practicing

life skills in all its forms. They were of the view that the current prevailing curriculum be reoriented to accommodate concepts and themes about life skills and integrated in the courses.

One of the teachers highlighted and suggested that;

“there is a need to bring drastic modifications in the existing teacher courses and for including more important themes on life skills. Ummm.....I thin.....these must be made a compulsory part of the daily instructional practices. Actually, emmmmmm....the policy related to life skills must be practically implemented.” (S03)

Another prospective teacher added by giving the following suggestion;

“there is an urgent need to focus and include life skills related concepts in the teacher education courses which are desired in present the job industry. Ummm....you know...this need of the hour.....I know that if these steps are taken....the prospective teachers will get the opportunity to learn and practice them.” (S05)

The majority of the prospective teachers thought that the existing curriculum did not effectively favour this. So according to them, there was a need for changing the current instructional system towards life skills based.

For materializing this, one of the prospective teachers narrated;

“I think.....ummmm....the important part of life skills practices is its inclusion in the existing teacher education curriculum. In my view the life skills need to be strongly made a part of the courses and given priority that may help the learners to learn and actively practice it in their lives. Ummm.....you know....teachers are important in this regard.....emmm....they may create an environment in classroom on daily basis to include them in the lesson plan and implement it as part of the syllabus”. (S02)

The prospective teachers argued that there was a need to regularly updating the subject matter related to life skills training, clarifying grading criteria, integrating theoretical and practical aspects. Most of the prospective teachers emphasized the need for introducing life skills-based courses, ensuring cooperative and trained faculty, using relevant learning materials, and creating a conducive learning environment.

In a nutshell, the replies and comments of the prospective teachers during the interviews overall made it clear that there was need of creating proper awareness among the students about life skills. There was a need for proper support from the management and teachers about life skills learning and implementation. The life skills concepts were required to be included and integrated in the existing teacher education curriculum. There was a need for bringing about proper changes and improvement in the existing curriculum, teaching and learning method as well as the entire system of teaching education.

1.7 Discussion

The main aim of this study was to unveil the insights of prospective teachers about the challenges in learning and practicing life skills practices in public sector universities of South Punjab. The qualitative findings of the study showed that the prospective teachers faced a number of challenges while practicing life skills in the classroom environment. For instance, the study found that there was lack of awareness among the prospective teachers regarding life skills and its practices. The students were unable to practice these skills because of lack of time as the teacher education courses were lengthy and based on lectures. The prospective teachers had less time for practicing these life skills in actual life situations.

There was no proper mechanism for practicing these skills as they were not integrated in the existing courses of teacher education. The courses were mainly focusing preparing students for exams and hence, their main focus was centered around finishing or covering the courses content rather than allowing the students to demonstrate their abilities in practicing these life skills in their collective or individual life pursuits. The prospective teachers did not receive any extra time or were encouraged by the teachers to practice life skills in the class. Therefore, there was a lack of motivation among them regarding the practice of life skills in classroom situations. Moreover, it was discovered that the learning atmosphere was also not student oriented, rather it was teacher centered. It was less supportive and less motivational in terms of classroom instruction as the teaching style was theoretical and not practical. The teachers adopted lecture oriented approach in delivering the lectures and students were deprived of getting any guidance or motivation and further opportunities for learning and practicing life skills.

Most of these findings of this current study closely are in line with the results of previous research studies on life skills and its practices. Mlambo (2018) explored perceptions of students about life skills practice and found that most of the students did not have proper understanding of the life skills and its practices in daily life. They were given information about the life skills and application in life but they did not receive any practical experience of practicing them in different life situations and even in the classroom situation. Similarly, D'Angelo et al.(2022) researched students' perceptions and found that there was a lack of cooperation on the part of teachers regarding application of life skills in practical situations of life as they were not properly aware about the concept and applications of life skills. The teaching and learning environment were lecture based and students received only information about the concept of life skills instead of practical training about how to apply them in life situations. Another study discovered that the teachers had little or no knowledge and competencies about effectively teaching the life skills which blocked the cognition of the students about proper understanding and application of these skills in different life situation (Wangchuk et al., 2019).

Previous studies have further highlighted that the life skills education is insufficiently prioritized in public universities, even the existing mechanisms do not effectively support the implementation of the life skills educational initiatives comprehensively. Most of the time, the failure is due to the less effective policies regarding the application and integration of these policies in universities, as a result, the policies have failed in terms of its effective implementation (Jacobs et al., 2022). The current findings are also in line with the results of previous research studies which have found that the existing resources were not sufficient for the proper implementation of the life skills in teacher education institutions of public universities. According to Abobo and Orodho (2014) there is clear lack of required instructional materials in the teacher education institutions which affect the

process of effective life skills instruction. There are no reference learning materials for additional learning of life skills practices.

The results of this current research study suggested that the life skills education may be effectively implemented and practiced if it is given serious attention by the concerned management and leadership. The management of teacher education provide professional training facilities to the teachers regarding life skills teaching in universities by integrating it in the courses of different teacher programs. This will help to teachers of these departments in universities to make sure that the prospective teachers are engaged, motivated in practicing these life skills in different life situations. They suggested that the institutions of the public universities may avail the services of professional counselors for the purpose of enhancing their skills to effectively practice the life skills.

The findings of the current study further suggested that the current teacher education courses must be upgraded to include the world life skills practices and trends which are taught, learned and practiced worldwide. The integration of these practices will help in facilitating the teachers in improving their professional teaching and provide the prospective teachers the opportunity to learn and practice the life skills in different life situations. The results suggested that teachers may adopt discussion, critical thinking and discussion in classroom rather than heavily focusing on lecture based approach for teaching life skills. The results suggested that prospective teachers may be given wider opportunities for not learning about the life skills but also practicing them in real life situations. For this purpose, the teachers may create an engaging teaching and learning environment in classroom. The findings further suggested that the curriculum of teacher education may be upgraded by integrating the key themes of life skills and the prospective teachers may be trained rather than teaching the concepts of life skills. To achieve this, the teachers of the teacher education institutions may adopt transformative and cooperative instructional approaches for the purpose of promoting life skills in the teaching and learning process. Activities may be designed and implemented to allow the student to learn and practice life skills through conducting interactive sessions in classroom. The results of this current study also suggested that technology may also be applied as a strategy for effective learning and practice of life skills among the prospective teachers.

1.8 Conclusion

The current system of teacher education institutions lack proper mechanisms for the promoting the practices of life skills. There is lack of awareness on the part of prospective teachers about life skills and practice implementation in practical life situations. Although, life skills have been somehow integrated in the current teacher education curriculum, however, its effective practices are still in its infancy and needs proper attention. There are time constraints, insufficient knowledge of teachers regarding life skills, lack of instructional resources and lack of professional training for teachers. Life skills are essential for prospective teachers for effectively dealing with challenges of professional life. Prospective teachers are the future educators of educational institutions. They need to learn and practice these skills to be able to deal with the challenges of modern life and guide their students. Learning of life skills will help in holistic development of their personalities. The current study highlighted the state of knowledge and practice of the life skills among the current students enrolled in the teacher education institutions of the public sector universities of South Punjab. It is not enough to teach life skills rather these skills must be properly inculcated among the students to enable them to practice these skills in practical life situations. These important competencies are in increasingly demanded in the current job market both in local

and global level. Hence, they are important to be integrated in the teacher education courses for preparing the future teachers to learn and practice them. Teachers may be trained in to enable them to further train the future teachers about effectively practicing these important skills in life situations. These results provide an insight to the policy makers of teacher education institutions along with laying a clear ground for the teacher education departments of the public sector universities for garnering support from the management and administration, collect resources for effective implementation of the life skills instruction and enabling the prospective teachers to learn and practice them in real life situations.

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