Towards a Re-conceptualisation of the Role of Teacher Educators in a Changing World: A Critical Pedagogy Perspective*

Sibel Akin-Sabuncu [i]
TED University & Teachers College, Columbia University

Abstract

This qualitative study examines teacher educators' articulations about their beliefs and motivations for preparing the next generation of teachers. The study also explores how teacher educators conceptualise their roles as the teachers of prospective teachers. Employing case study design, the participants included 10 teacher educators who serve at a highly selective, public, research university in Turkey. The data were collected through semi-structured and in-depth individual interviews. Adopting critical pedagogy as the theoretical framework, the interviews were analyzed by content analysis method with the help of NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. The results showed that the teacher educators specifically saw their roles as enacting change, advocating for democracy, equity, and social justice, and promoting the improvement and welfare of societies, in an effort to bring more emancipatory educational practices in the society through pre-service teacher education. This study furthers our understanding of how teacher education programs could improve their professional preparation and practices to push the agenda for social justice and equity in K-12 schools.

----

[i] **Sibel Akin-Sabuncu,** Assist. Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education, Ted University, ORCID: 0000-0002-4081-1233

Email: sa3169@tc.columbia.edu

INTRODUCTION

The number of poor children, children of immigrants, and children with disabilities as "minority groups" has been increasing dramatically both at the national and international levels. Although these changes represent a shift in student demographics in the educational system, the present educational systems are failing to respond to the needs of minoritized children who are not part of the mainstream (Apple, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Han, Madhuri, & Scull, 2015). In spite of the tremendous changes evident in societies that have experienced an increase in cultural and linguistic diversity, schools and faculties of education are still functioning as if teachers were prepared for the classrooms of half a century ago (Nieto, 2000). Hence, this has led to many calls and serious implications for the reform of K-12 schooling and of teacher education, since we need teachers willing to advocate for social change and social justice. In response to these calls, in many countries teacher education has become the focus of intense debate over how to prepare sufficient and highly qualified teachers (Cochran-Smith, Grudnoff, Orland-Barak, & Smith, 2020; Swennen & Van der Klink, 2009), who are not only capable of educating students but also work for social justice and understand that the structural inequities operating within schooling perpetuate inequality of educational opportunities for different segments of the school population (Cochran-Smith et al., 1999). However, this is hardly accomplished without examining the assumptions, values, and beliefs of teacher educators – those who teach the teachers – and how this posture informs, consciously or unconsciously, their perceptions and actions (Bartolomé, 2004) in preparing prospective teachers. Although teacher educators are usually held responsible for teacher quality and blamed when students fail to meet expectations in schools, traditionally scarce attention has been paid to teacher educators who are to meet the complex demands of educating teachers for the 21st century (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020). Given that education is unavoidably an intentional (Ben-Peretz, 2001) and political (Cochran-Smith, 2000) enterprise, with teachers having ideas and the power to shape it, critical questions have, therefore, arisen particularly for teacher educators to reconsider the aims of education in our changing world (Ben-Peretz, 2001). Such questions include how to design teacher education programs, and most critically, infuse social justice into pre-service teacher education and prepare teachers who are seeking to advance educational equity for all children and work toward a more just society (Cochran-Smith, 2010).

Indeed, both nationally in Turkey and internationally, teacher education has long been criticized as incapable of preparing highly-qualified teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Yıldırım, 2011). Nonetheless, this responsibility continues to rest primarily with teacher education programs, wherein teacher educators are important players who spearhead educational reforms and are responsible for preparing competent teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2003, 2010). Teacher educators not only provide guidance to student teachers and support their learning, but they also play a significant role in teaching prospective teachers how to teach and in promoting good models and certain views of learning (Swennen, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008). Given that "teachers teach as they are taught," if we are to have teachers who work for social change, we must obviously also have teacher educators who explore and reconsider their own assumptions and beliefs (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007) about social change. Embedded in this perspective, what teachers attain from preparation depends in part on the beliefs and perspectives that their teacher educators bring with themselves to teacher education since the practices of teacher educators are an embodiment of their own educational beliefs and intentions. Those beliefs, shaped by the cumulative experience of teacher educators' implicit personal and educational biographies (Weinstein, 1990), hold implicit assumptions about people, classrooms, learning, the academic material to be taught, and events (Kagan, 1992). Therefore, they function as a filter for decision-making processes and determine how the teacher education program is viewed (Villegas, 2007). They drive classroom actions (Richardson, 1996) and are therefore integral components and powerful mediators of teaching practice which shape processes in teacher education programs (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996), as well as students' learning opportunities and experiences (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Thus, how teacher educators perceive their role may influence and shape their teaching practices, which may impact prospective teachers' development, shape their experience of learning to teach, and change their own conceptions and teaching practices (Tatto, 1998).

Scholars and researchers have studied much about teachers and their observable effects on students; however, missing from teacher education policy conversations, research on teacher education has largely overlooked teacher educators with regards to who they are, what they believe, and what they do (Berry, 2007; Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996; Goodwin et al., 2014; Grierson, 2010; Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen, & Wubbels, 2005; Loughran, 2014; Lunenberg et al., 2007; Murray & Male, 2005; Smith, 2003; Swennen & Bates, 2010; Swennen, Jones, & Volman, 2010). Accordingly, Cochran-Smith (2003) notes that not only has much less attention been devoted to teacher educators, but even when they are at the heart of discussion, the focus tends to be more on demographics and general trends, such as what their backgrounds are and what they teach.

Within the landscape of teacher education research in Turkey, Hazır-Bıkmaz and Aslan (2019) similarly report that critical issues such as the competencies that teacher educators need to possess, their preparation, professional identity, and professional development have received scant attention. At the same time, the number of faculties of education peaked in 2019 at 93, and there are around 10.000 teacher educators working at those faculties (Hazır-Bıkmaz & Aslan, 2019). Despite this, there have been only a few studies focusing on teacher educators, including the investigation of their professional development (e.g., Gökmenoğlu, Beyazova, & Kılıçoğlu, 2015), characteristics (e.g., Erginer, Erginer, & Bedir, 2009; Fidan, Duban, Yüksel, Kasapoğlu, & Yamaç, 2013; Korkmaz, 2013), and the qualities that are expected from them based on the perspectives of pre-service teacher candidates (Bahar-Güner, Tunca, Alkın-Şahin, & Oğuz, 2015; Celik, 2011; Tunca, Şahin, Oğuz, & Güner, 2015). However, the neglect of how teacher educators view their roles and responsibilities for high-quality teacher preparation may legitimise, and even undermine, certain views about the purposes of schooling in a democratic society and the role of the teachers in educational policy and reform (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Moreover, given that quality teacher education depends on quality teacher educators (Goodwin et al., 2014), no structural or curriculum change can make a significant difference if teacher educators, who translate and enact the material, are not committed to social change rooted in equity and social justice. It is, therefore, vital to examine teacher educators' beliefs and motivations regarding their roles and responsibilities for preparing the next generation of teachers, which can offer critical insights into improving the professional preparation and teaching practices of teacher candidates (Villegas, 2007), who are committed to teaching for social justice, equity, and democracy, as teacher educators view and shape the teacher education programs through the beliefs that they have (Weinstein, 1990).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study lie in critical pedagogy to analyse teacher educators' beliefs on their intentions and commitments to empowering education and preparing student teachers for the goal of teaching for social justice (Shor, 1992). In adopting this framework, critical pedagogy is defined by drawing on the work of Freire and Giroux in recognizing that education is one place where the individual and the society are constructed. According to this framework, education is a transformative, reflexive, and liberatory action that involves inquiry towards developing a more socially just world, and it promotes the process of raising critical consciousness (Darder et al., 2003; Freire, 1998; Shor, 1993; Shor & Freire, 1987). This theoretical framework is grounded in the beliefs that education promotes an emancipatory culture of schooling that seeks to transform classroom structures and practices that perpetuate oppressive, unjust, and undemocratic life (Darder et al., 2003). It views education as a process that helps to fight against reproducing the status quo and advocates for denouncing existing inequities and discriminatory school and social conditions, constraints, barriers, and practices that diverse others face (Bartolomé, 2004; Han et al., 2015). Accordingly, education ultimately aims to liberate the oppressed in schools and society (Darder et al., 2003; Kincheloe 2009; McLaren 2009). To this end, combined with praxis - the ongoing relationship between theory and practice as a core principle of critical pedagogy - its aim is that future teachers will learn to see students fully and fairly; see themselves as active agents of change in schooling; remain mindful of the political, cultural, social agendas they bring to teaching with them; and find practical application in classrooms to become courageous in their commitment to defend social justice for all students (Ayers, Michie, & Rome, 2004). It is also indispensable that teachers strive, beyond technical

skills, to challenge traditional structures of power and control in the classroom in order to create humanizing, culturally responsive, inclusive, socially sensitive, democratic, and self-empowering educational contexts (Kincheloe, 2012). Such contexts will allow teachers to encourage students to become critical thinkers who can act upon the world (Bartolomé, 2004) and develop autonomous habits of mind rather than passive habits of following authority (Shor, 1992).

Given that education is by nature social, historical, political, and cultural (Giroux, 1981), it is therefore a value-laden social practice (Liston & Zeichner, 1987). As such, there is no unchanging role for teachers (Shor, 1987). From this pedagogical stance, teachers at all levels of schooling are potentially powerful agents of social change (Giroux, 1997). In particular, teacher educators have a chief role for teacher education in efforts to bring about more emancipatory, critical, and productive educational practices in schools, in that they are to educate, not inculcate, prospective teachers as reflective practitioners equipped with reflective inquiry and analytical thought (Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Milner, 2003). In accordance with these notions, critical pedagogy serves as a starting point in this study for asking questions that will help teacher educators to explore their beliefs and evaluate critically their practices to empower themselves for social change (Shor, 1993). According to critical pedagogues, one needs to analyse their own ideologies as critical educators to strengthen a critical classroom practice (Graziano, 2008) Thus, through the lens of critical pedagogy, this study addresses how teacher educators articulate and reflect on their beliefs and motivations for preparing the next generation of teachers. To this end, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

What beliefs and motivations do teacher educators hold for preparing the next generation of teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Design

Drawing on the methods and the principles of qualitative research paradigm, this study employed a case study design, which is an empirical inquiry that involves an in-depth examination of a particular "case" within its real-life context and draws on the prior development of theoretical propositions that guide the data analysis (Yin, 2014). Accordingly, the present study utilized a single case study design and took place within the context of a highly selective, public research university (Heritage University, a pseudonym, the case) located in the capital city of Turkey, whose overarching mission is described as dedicated to improving the quality of people's everyday lives both at the national and universal level, with strong aspirations to empower democracy, advance research, community service and collaboration, and develop policy and practice about teaching, learning, and human development across the lifespan.

Context and the Case

As inevitable determinants of educational change, the effects of globalisation and neo-liberal economic policies all over the world, including in Turkey, have been manifested through a number of mechanisms, such as structural reforms, curriculum, and administration. Among these mechanisms, changes in the structure and content of teacher education have been a central element (Guven, 2008). While several models of teacher education have been implemented in the history of teacher preparation in Turkey, the major change took place in 1981 when a "unified" system of higher education was introduced and the responsibilities of teacher preparation were transferred from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to the Council of Higher Education (CHE). This being the case, teacher education is bound within the institutional mandates of higher education, is subjected to bureaucratic tendencies, and is governed by national standards regarding teacher certification. Although several other reasons

account for the narrow scope of teacher education research, policy, and practices in Turkey, it is, therefore, noteworthy that there is a top-down approach to the teacher education curriculum, as teacher education programs have been more or less prescribed by the CHE since 1998 (Yıldırım, 2013). Within this structure, the increasing rigidity and greater control of teacher education reforms are less a response to global economic changes and more a part of new policies that have been moving from evolutionary to technocratic modernization (Guven, 2008). This shift may imply that implementing a teacher education system that challenges social, political, and economic structures is particularly compelling given the internal structure and policies surrounding teacher education.

Specifically, teacher education programs in Turkey are frequently under severe attack by the structural and curricular changes mandated by national authorities. These mandates relate to a range of issues including admissions, knowledge base, duration of teacher education, certification, alternative teacher education, the high number of faculties of education, standards, and quality and quantity concerns (Atanur-Baskan & Karasel-Ayda, 2018; Azar, 2011; Bilir, 2011; Kızılçaoğlu, 2006; Ulubey & Başaran, 2019; Üstüner, 2004; Yıldırım, 2011). These issues in teacher education programs have been rooted in the longstanding competing agendas over teacher education (Yıldırım, 2011). Paradoxically, however, teacher education programs are required to substantiate their efforts to improve K-12 students' academic achievement, which is increasingly considered as the sole measure of learning as a result of an immense standardised testing culture underpinned by a 'one-size fits all' standard approach to schooling (Leistyna, Lavandez, & Nelson, 2004; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). Moreover, the relationship between theory and practice is unfortunately far too often neglected or dismissed in teacher education programs. In such a disheartening climate, teacher educators have been compelled to emphasize the narrower, more technical aspects of teacher education rather than other aspects which are more congruent with a social justice perspective that would take account of broader educational aims and purposes (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009) and appreciate the complexity and uncertainty of a teaching-learning relationship (Weinstein, 1990). Consequently, prospective and in-service teachers are criticised for being deskilled technicians who are uncritical consumers of existing knowledge, instead of active subjects engaged in inquiry (Altan, 1998; Guven, 2008; Leistyna et al., 2004). Similarly, one of the most detrimental results of this perspective on teacher education is that teacher educators no longer possess a good deal of the social, historical, cultural, philosophical, and ideological perspectives that are fundamental to the field (Guven, 2008).

Within this larger context, the Heritage University has a unique place considering the critical role it has played in the ongoing process of democratization in Turkey since its foundation. In addition, the university is unique among public universities in that it has a relatively global faculty profile; utilizes English as the medium of instruction; recruits highly qualified academic staff; preserves a reputation of excellence in scientific, economic, and social achievements; and is a leading and respectable higher education institution (Caliskan, Akin, & Engin-Demir, 2020). The Heritage University also has a climate that embraces its campus as a cultural heritage, which enables the creation of a common, institutionalized, and shared culture among its members alongside its deep-rooted socio-political history. That is, since the flowering of political activism in the 1960s across the world, the Heritage University has remained one of the centers of student protests and a longstanding site of active citizenship and resistance movements in Turkey.

Participants

Employing criterion sampling (Patton, 1990), the participants included 10 teacher educators, who offered a set of core pedagogical courses that are mandatory in the curricula of all teacher education programs (e.g., Introduction to Education, Educational Psychology, Classroom Management, and Guidance). Thus, utilizing criterion sampling, the study ensured the selection of the participants who were likely to be information-rich based on their contribution to the professional development of preservice teachers in different teacher education programs, rather than a particular teacher education program. The average age of the participants was 46, ranging from 37 to 52. Their experiences as teacher educators ranged from 3 to 27 years. While all of the teacher educators were in tenure-track appointments, their academic titles ranged from Assistant Professor to Professor.

Data Collection and Analysis

After receiving ethical approval from the institutional ethics committee, the data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth, and face-to-face individual interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) as interviews seek to gain insight into the participants' world by eliciting rich information about their beliefs, opinions, and experiences from their own frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 1990). The interview schedule was developed by the researcher and consisted of both demographical and open-ended questions, which were revised and piloted after taking the opinions of two experts in the field, who had experience in conducting qualitative research in teacher education. The demographical questions included participants' gender, age, educational background, experience as a teacher (if any), experience as a teacher educator in general and in the Heritage University specifically, academic title, and the courses they offered in teacher education programs. In addition to the demographical questions, the interview schedule consisted of seven open-ended questions that are also supported with probes and prompts (e.g., What are some understandings, principles, or goals you have for your student teachers? How do you define effective teacher educator? What fundamental knowledge, skills, and attitudes must a teacher educator have in order to prepare teachers who can respond effectively to the needs of all students?). Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to the study. Each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes and was audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews were conducted in Turkish.

The data were analysed by content analysis method. Accordingly, the process of analysis included inductive coding, which enabled a recursive and reflexive process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to identify, code, and categorise the essential patterns (Patton, 1990). The data analysis was performed with the help of NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data were first broken into manageable units or codes. Then, the researcher searched for recurrences, patterns, and regularities among those codes to derive broader themes or categories that reflected the overarching research question (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). After a set of transcripts were coded by the researcher, an initial code list was created and then revised based on the discussions with two experts who coded the same set of transcripts and helped ensure the consistency of the codes and categories developed by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). To present the findings in participants' own words, sample quotations were identified and translated to English by the researcher. To ensure the accuracy of translations and properly convey meaning from one language to another, the selected quotations and their translations were checked by an expert in the field

of English Language Teaching. Pseudonyms were used to afford anonymity to the participants in reporting the findings.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this qualitative research was ensured by utilizing different strategies. First, the strategies for assuring credibility included taking the opinions of three experts on the interview questions, piloting the interview schedule with two teacher educators prior to the data collection with the main participants, following in-depth data collection procedures, establishing intercoder reliability, and ensuring referential adequacy. Second, transferability was provided by employing purposive sampling strategy and providing a thick description of the entire research process. Lastly, to ensure dependability and confirmability, the study benefited from an audit trail, in which the researcher engaged in conversations with an external researcher, who had expertise in qualitative research, to monitor all the steps taken throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

FINDINGS

The results demonstrated that teacher educators' reflections on their motivations for preparing prospective teachers are grounded in 1) enacting change; 2) advocating for democracy; equity, and social justice; and 3) promoting the improvement and welfare of societies:

Enacting Change

Most participants explained that teacher educators play a substantial role in enacting change in societies, especially by preparing teachers who can challenge stereotypes and social constructions. To illustrate, Ayşe (pseudonym), articulated:

> "Prejudice in K-12 schools takes many silent forms. Lowered expectations and 'one size-fits-all' thinking have as equally dramatic effects on the students as any open display of prejudice. The former is even harder to detect. I aim to help pre-service teachers make realisations and connections, as well as engage in a reflective practice for their actions, which, I believe, can lead to social change."

In enacting change, many participants also made connections to fighting oppression, whereby they explained that they viewed teacher educators as activists. For example, Selma (pseudonym) pointed out:

> "I work to provide teacher candidates with the tools to shape themselves, which can ultimately contribute to social change. I want them to break down barriers in their classrooms and forge connections between their students, inspiring them to be active and engaged citizens. Finally, I strive to support them to create a school environment that all students feel empowers them. Teacher educators can create inclusive learning environments for inquiry and dialogue through creative, flexible, and thoughtful pedagogy and curriculum that transcends limitations to learning, including exclusionary, non-unifying classroom practices and systemic forms of oppression."

Moreover, especially by discussing the pervasive testing culture on a larger scale in Turkey, almost all participants addressed the importance of recognizing teacher candidates' individual differences. Accordingly, Veli (pseudonym) suggested that teacher educators should build upon the funds of knowledge that they bring to initial teacher preparation:

"…Testing's core problem is that its method of learning is only geared toward one type of student. As a teacher educator, it is important to recognise that every student teacher learns in different ways and the main role a teacher educator has is to allow everyone an access point into the material by drawing on what students bring to their learning process, by which s/he can start enacting change in the classroom environment."

However, all teacher educators criticised the mandatory teacher education curriculum. They noted that their motivation to embrace teacher candidates' lived experiences, identities, and realities was hindered by a curriculum that leaves little room for creating curricular openings to draw on students' knowledge. National teacher education policies and systemic structures emerged as limitations that were beyond the individual responsibilities of teacher educators. Nonetheless, the participants expressed high motivation to confront such obstacles even though they did not consider this as an easy task. Accordingly, Veli, like some other participants, further pointed to the importance of acting as a mentor who models educational goals, integrates various activities into teacher education as a way of organizing extra-curricular activities, and offers additional learning opportunities to the teacher candidates in enacting change through teacher education:

"…I believe every student can find success through the educational environments that suit them best as individuals, and it is my role as an educator to transform the existing prescribed educational settings and help teacher candidates find their individualised way. Yet, in so doing, these teacher candidates do not need one more authoritative voice dictating right from wrong, they need a compassionate mentor, who would walk the journey towards academic achievement with them. In becoming that person, my work traverses across music, film, theater, poetry, and visual art to narrate the inner and outer lives of student teachers."

Lastly, some participants underscored the role of collaboration with community members and colleagues and the importance of integrating additional critical course readings into the given curriculum and the prescribed course descriptions mandated by the CHE.

Advocating for Democracy, Equity, and Social Justice

Teacher educators not only connected their role of educating future teachers to enacting change, but also aimed to raise teacher activists who will advocate for democracy, equity, and social justice. Specifically, most participants mentioned their responsibility to raise prospective teachers who will work to narrow the achievement gap that grows increasingly wide due to factors such as socioeconomic status and other sources of inequity in schools that continue to have growing numbers of diverse students with cultural, linguistic, and immigrant backgrounds. For instance, Selma (pseudonym) addressed her commitment to recognizing and ending inequalities in the pursuit of social justice and providing access to quality education for all students:

"…Education, if perhaps not the sole cause of the opportunity gap is certainly a key player; as a teacher educator, my goal is to prepare teachers who work for eliminating our schools' role in perpetuating it. I believe that there is no better tool to empower students than a teacher's faith or knowledge that we pay forward. As teacher educators, we should bridge the gaps by equipping future teachers with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to fight against the inequalities in students' educational opportunities and provide quality education to all students.

In discussing how to fight against the systems of social injustice and inequality of educational opportunities that affect students, parents, and schools, Sevgi (pseudonym) echoed:

> "I am dedicated to delivering the message to my students that education is a fundamental human right and every child deserves a high quality education. My goal is to raise critical consciousness and develop critical thinking skills of teacher candidates and help them prove that the students in their classroom, who are minorities, disabled, or come from low-income and/or rural communities, will make dramatic gains and outperform their peers who are of higher socio-economic status."

In stating their perception that the teacher educator's role includes promoting social justice, some teacher educators articulated that they expected teacher education system to provide them with the tools, autonomy, flexibility, and support necessary to encourage prospective teachers to critically examine their world. In relation to this, they further highlighted the critical role of teacher educators to empower future teachers with the ability to examine the issues of authority and power to enact democracy, equity, and social justice in educational settings. Therein, Hatice (pseudonym), like most participants, asserted, "I see the prospective teachers as the Heritage University graduates, in a profession to be intentionally cultivated, from a school of education that engages the injustice it seeks to resist." Hence, the participants specifically underlined the context of Heritage University and connected its climate to their role in advocating for democracy, equity, and social justice.

Promoting the Improvement and Welfare of Societies

Most teacher educators stated that they play a crucial role in promoting the improvement and welfare of society. Specifically, the participants expressed a strong link between their role in conducting high-quality research that would make an impact on educational policy and practice, and its contribution to the improvement of the society in which they live. Similarly, in a bi-directional focus, all participants stated that practice-led research was as important as research-led practice in terms of contributing to a body of knowledge and, thereby, revolutionizing academic research. Implicit in these perceptions was the teacher educators' motivation to be part of a larger partnership that would strengthen ties between faculty, school, and the community. Moreover, by envisioning their role as one that supports contextualised, dynamic relationships with schools and society, some participants, like Fatma (pseudonym), alluded to a commitment to recognizing and rebuilding the schools' communities by serving as a role model and mentor for future teachers:

> "Teacher candidates need role models and mentors inside and outside of class who demonstrate the importance of education in shaping one's future. As a teacher educator, it is my responsibility to engage them in the discussions of how education can be used as a tool particularly to improve the welfare of the society. To this end, I aim to support partnerships between schools, districts, and universities through my research projects and the courses that I offer to support high quality teacher preparation."

A large number of participants also pointed to the importance of engaging in reflective practice, building collegiality, and strengthening community partnership in order to develop inclusive curricular practices and pedagogy. For example, Kemal (pseudonym) stated:

"…Through community work, collegiality, and inclusive classroom practices, teacher educators can transcend limits and move toward more democratic and meaningful engagement with the prospective teachers who will, in turn, aim to strengthen their own students' community membership and create opportunities for their academic and social achievement with transformative outcomes."

Thus, the participants believed that such participatory pedagogies and practices in democratic learning environments would allow teacher candidates to create opportunities for community members facing a range of political, social, and economic realities, and this would help them stay connected with the community.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Over the past decades, there has been intense national and global attention to teacher quality, specifically in terms of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers should have. Regarding this debate, a controversial aspect of teacher education has been whether and how teacher education programs should emphasize social justice as part of the curriculum (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). That is, considering the fact that the task of successfully preparing teachers to work with an ever-growing culturally and linguistically diverse student body poses an increasing challenge for teacher educators, it is important to expose prospective teachers to the best practical strategies to provide for effective teaching for all students. However, this task is unlikely to be accomplished without examining teacher educators' beliefs and intentions, since those beliefs shape and inform teacher educators' perceptions and actions in pre-service teacher education programs (Bartolomé, 2004). In contributing to this conversation, this study explored how teacher educators, as the teachers of prospective teachers, articulated and reflected the beliefs and motivations they hold for preparing the next generation of teachers. To this end, the study employed the tenets of critical pedagogy to analyse the beliefs and intentions of teacher educators within the context of a public university in Turkey. The selected university, Heritage University, has played a unique role in the enduring process of democratisation in Turkey and preserved its reputation for being a continuing site of active citizenship and resistance movements. By situating the study in this context, the research has gained insight into the teacher educators' commitment to social justice and empowering teacher education as a transformative process towards social change.

The results of the study showed that the teacher educators had strong commitments to preparing future generations of teachers to dismantle and challenge aspects of the system that reinforce social inequities, thus aiming to improve the educational opportunities of all students (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). To this end, teacher educators specifically saw their roles as 1) enacting change; 2) advocating for democracy, equity, and social justice; and 3) promoting the improvement and welfare of society. Through these roles, they aimed to encourage more emancipatory educational practices in society through pre-service teacher education (Liston & Zeichner, 1987). Teachers educated within such programs would then be prepared to identify connections between life in the classroom and wider social conditions, and they could ensure that all students have rich learning opportunities. Accordingly, it appears evident from the results of the study that the participants' vision of being teacher educators is not limited to engaging in high-quality teaching and research or exemplified as "just good teaching" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009), but it extends to certain roles and responsibilities in other dimensions, such as working for social change and social transformation, advocating for democracy, equity, and social justice, that may also account for preparing highly qualified future teachers. This result is remarkable especially within the context of current debates in which student teachers are criticised, both nationally and

globally, for lacking intellectual knowledge, being deskilled, and being trained as technicians who consume existing ill-conceived knowledge of "just good teaching" (Guven, 2008; Leistyna et al., 2004). In response to such concerns, the teacher educators participating in this study were more motivated by an intrinsic desire to rectify social and educational inequalities and injustices and sought to achieve this by creating learning environments that would provide prospective teachers with the mindsets and pedagogical skills needed to develop critical consciousness and help them question, recognise, and challenge perpetuated inequalities. Given that organizational culture encompasses the collective values, expectations, beliefs, and norms shared by the members of an organization (Schein, 2004), these findings may not be surprising, as Heritage University has created a distinctive organizational culture in the Turkish higher education system and a unique socio-political context since its founding (Caliskan et al., 2020).. Hence, it would be reasonable to posit that the teacher educators' beliefs and motivations regarding their roles to prepare future teachers to enact change, advocate for democracy, and promote the improvement of societies may be indicative of Heritage University's organizational culture, as well as its deeply rooted commitment to empowering democracy and social justice and improving the quality of citizens' lives.

Moreover, the emphasis on the participating teacher educators' perceived roles is not surprising given the larger social, economic, and political tensions that Turkey has gone through over the last couple of years (Gokturk, Sismanoglu-Kaymaz, & Bozoğlu, 2018). That is, as part of the wider socio-political context of Turkey, the top-down approach to the teacher education curriculum has become even more prescribed by the CHE with increasing rigidity and control over teacher education reform. Thus, the teacher educators might have perceived their roles as preparing teachers who can fight oppression and challenge stereotypes and social constructs. They might also have seen their roles as recognizing and valuing teacher candidates' individual differences and embracing their lived experiences and identities in order to raise future teachers who can strive to narrow the achievement gap resulting from several sources of inequities. Indeed, considering the growing number of students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Turkey (Arar, Örücü, & Ak-Küçükçayır, 2019), teacher educators must work to educate prospective teachers to respond to the needs of diverse classrooms and accommodate the holistic needs of all students. However, the participating teacher educators reported that enacting their perceived roles was often difficult due to the mandated teacher education curriculum, which limited autonomy, flexibility, and the support that they could offer to pre-service teacher education to empower prospective teachers to critically examine their world.

In the light of these discussions, the teacher educators' motivations for preparing future teachers can offer critical insights for moving pre-service teacher education beyond equipping teacher candidates with technical skills and instead creating inclusive, socially sensitive, democratic, and socially just educational environments (Kincheloe, 2012). Through such reforms, prospective teachers can be empowered as autonomous, critical thinkers who can act upon the world (Bartolomé, 2004). Moreover, given that belief structures undergird people's decisions and actions (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1992), the beliefs and motivations of teacher educators may significantly shape teacher education programs and the learning experiences of teacher candidates. As such, this study has unique implications for how teacher education programs could improve their professional preparation, impact, and practices to push an agenda for social justice and equity in K-12 schools. To this end, teacher educators' beliefs regarding their roles and responsibilities for preparing the next generation of teachers can help them face their own biases or stances regarding the purposes of education and schooling, which could further provide teacher candidates with the opportunity to develop

new eyes that can transform existing teaching practices by recognising inequities and dismantling unjust practices. This transformation would allow them to adopt practices that are congruent with the tenets of social justice. Although prospective teachers enter teacher education programs with pre-existing beliefs about schooling, teaching, and learning based on their own experiences, they can change or modify their beliefs with the help of teacher educators in pre-service teacher education. By developing new critical perspectives, future teachers can make sense of their experiences in teacher education programs (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan, & Swidler, 1992) to reflect and act upon the world in a way that promotes social change and teaching for social justice. This is especially vital as research suggests that teachers' beliefs influence and shape their perceptions and judgments, which, consequently, impact their actions in the classroom (Pajares, 1993).

In contributing to the conversation on how teacher education programs could improve their professional preparation, the present study further addresses the crucial role of curriculum and courses as highlighted by the teacher educators. Moreover, it emphasizes the place of reflective practice and inquiry in pre-service teacher education; the importance of engaging in dialogue and collaboration with colleagues, schools, and the community; and the need for extracurricular activities to be integrated into teacher education programs. As evident in the teacher educators' statements, the study also highlights the role of the clinical practice of teaching, mentoring teacher candidates, practical engagement with pedagogy, and the bi-directional relationship between research and practice in focusing on questions of equity and diversity. These aspects of teacher educators' response illustrate the importance of challenging deficit notions about the capabilities of students from low socio-economic, migrant, or disadvantaged minority backgrounds in K-12 schools. Moreover, this study sheds light into certain structural and institutional sources that hinder teacher educators in higher education from fulfilling their perceived roles. Specifically, this study has highlighted challenges associated with the top-down approach to the teacher education curriculum and the rigidity of teacher education reforms (Guven, 2008; Yıldırım, 2013) as well as the ever-growing standardised testing culture underpinned by a 'one-size fits all' approach to schooling (Leistyna et al., 2004; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009).

Lastly, although the teacher educators expressed commitments to social justice, it is important that their intentions and beliefs are reflected in practice, which points to the formal preparation of teacher educators in terms of developing an understanding of diverse contexts, conceptual lenses, social justice issues, and pedagogical strategies (Lee, Akin, & Goodwin, 2019). While teacher educators are often assumed to be the linchpins of educational reform and are explicitly or implicitly held accountable for teacher quality (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020), they cannot model and enact what they are not prepared for (Lee et al., 2019). Thus, an essential aspect of teacher educator preparation is the need for multiple and continuing opportunities to reconsider and critique their own beliefs and assumptions pertaining to diversity and educational/social inequality, in addition to how those beliefs and assumptions are translated into teacher education policy and practice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020).

Limitations

This study acknowledges its limitation of relying only on interview data. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies employ observations in pre-service teacher education settings to demonstrate how teacher educator beliefs influence the enactment of the teacher education curriculum. This study also acknowledges that case studies cannot be generalised to a larger context. While the findings of this study are limited to the case study institution (the

Heritage University),, the current study is built on the strength of case studies as the findings are interpreted by contextualisation and comply with the notion of transferability.

REFERENCES

Altan, M. Z. (1998). A call for change and pedagogy: A critical analysis of teacher education in Turkey. *European Journal of Education*, *33*(4), 407-417.

Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum.* New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Arar, K., Örücü, D., & Ak-Küçükçayır, G. (2019). Dramatic experiences of educators coping with the influx of Syrian refugees in Syrian schools in Turkey. In K. Arar, J. S. Brooks, & I. Bogotch (Eds.), *Education, immigration and migration: Policy, leadership and praxis for a changing world* (pp. 145-167). UK: Emerald Publishing.

Atanur-Baskan, G. A., & Karasel-Ayda, N. K. (2018). A case study on the problems of teacher training system based on the opinions of faculty members, school administrators, teachers, and unionists in north Cyprus. *Education Sciences*, *8*(3), 127.

Ayers, W., Michie, G., & Rome, A. (2004). Embers of hope: In search of a meaningful critical pedagogy. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 31*(1), 123-130.

Azar, A. (2011). Türkiye'de öğretmen eğitimi üzerine bir söylem: Nitelik mi, nicelik mi? [Quality or quantity: A statement for teacher training in Turkey]. *Journal of Higher Education and Science, 1*(1), 36-38.

Bahar-Güner, Ö., Tunca, N., Alkın-Şahin, S., & Oğuz, A. (2015). Prospective teachers' metaphoric perceptions regarding the teacher educator. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, 5*(4), 419-444.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bartolomé, L. I. (2004). Critical pedagogy and teacher education: Radicalizing prospective teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 31*(1), 97-122.

Ben-Peretz, M. (2001). The impossible role of teacher educators in a changing world. *Journal of Teacher Education, 52*(1), 48-56.

Berry, A. (2007). Reconceptualizing teacher educator knowledge as tensions: Exploring the tension between valuing and reconstructing experience. *Studying Teacher Education, 3*(2), 117-134.

Bilir, A. (2011). Türkiye'de öğretmen yetiştirmenin tarihsel evrimi ve istihdam politikaları [The historical evolution of teacher training and employment policies in Turkey]. *Ankara University, Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences, 44*(2), 223-246.

Bird, T., Anderson, L., Sullivan, B., & Swidler, S. (1992). *Pedagogical balancing acts: A teacher educator encounters problems in an attempt to influence prospective teachers' beliefs.* Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* The USA: Pearson Education.

Caliskan, O., Akin, S., & Engin-Demir, C. (2020). Democratic environment in higher education: The case of a Turkish public university. International Journal of Educational Development, 72, 1-8.

Celik, S. (2011). Characteristics and competencies for teacher educators: Addressing the need for improved professional standards in Turkey. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *36*(4), 73-87.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2000). Teacher education at the turn of the century. [Editorial]. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 163-165.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2003). Learning and unlearning: The education of teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19*, 5-28.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). Defining the outcomes of teacher education: What's social justice got to do with it?. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 32*(3), 193-212.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2010). Toward a theory of teacher education for social justice. In M. Fullan, A. Hargreaves, D. Hopkins, & A. Lieberman (Eds.), *The international handbook of educational change* (pp. 445-467). The Netherlands: Springer.

Cochran-Smith, M., Albert, L., Dimattia, P., Freedman, S., Jackson, R., Mooney, J., Neisler, O., Peck, A., & Zollers, N. (1999). Seeking social justice: A teacher education faculty's self-study. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 2*(3), 229-253.

Cochran-Smith, M., Grudnoff, L., Orland-Barak, L., & Smith, K. (2020). Educating teacher educators: International perspectives. *The New Educator, 16*(1), 5-24.

Cochran-Smith, M., Shakman, K., Jong, C., Terrell, D. G., Barnatt, J., & McQuillan, P. (2009). Good and just teaching: The case for social justice in teacher education. *American Journal of Education, 115*(3), 347-377.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Darder, A., Baltodano, M. P., & Torres, R. D. (2009). Critical pedagogy: An introduction. In A. Darder, M. P. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 1–20). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ducharme, M., & Ducharme, E. (1996). A study of teacher educators: Research from the USA. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 22*(1), 57-70.

Erginer, E., Erginer, A., Bedir, G. (2009). An analysis of the academic backgrounds and teaching competences of the instructors assigned to faculties of education. *Abant Izzet Baysal University Journal of Faculty of Education, 9*(2), 93-108.

Fidan, N., Duban, N., Yüksel, A., Kasapoğlu, K., & Yamaç, A. (2013). Characteristics of teacher educators from pre-service classroom teachers' perspectives. *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science, 6*(1), 136-159.

Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers. Letters to those who dare teach. The edge: Critical studies in educational theory.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1981). *Ideology, culture, and the process of schooling.* London: Falmer.

Giroux, H. A. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture, and schooling.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Gokturk, S., Sismanoglu-Kaymaz, O., & Bozoglu, O. (2018). Experimenting with internationalisation in troubled times: The critical case of Turkish higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 40*(6), 566–582.

Goodwin, A. L., Smith, L., Souto-Manning, M., Cheruvu, R., Tan, M. Y., Reed, R., & Taveras, L. (2014). What should teacher educators know and be able to do? Perspectives from practicing teacher educators. *Journal of Teacher Education, 65*(4), 284-302.

Gökmenoğlu, T., Beyazova, G., & Kılıçoğlu, A. (2015). Professional development: Teacher educators as learners. *Elementary Education Online, 14*(2), 574-592.

Graziano, K. J. (2008). Walk the talk: Connecting critical pedagogy and practice in teacher education. *Teaching Education, 19*(2), 153-163.

Grierson, A. L. (2010). Changing conceptions of effective teacher education: The journey of a novice teacher educator. *Studying Teacher Education, 6*(1), 3-15.

Guven, I. (2008). Teacher education reform and international globalization hegemony: Issues and challenges in Turkish teacher education. *International Journal of Social Sciences, 3*(1), 1-17.

Han, K. T., Madhuri, M., & Scull, W. R. (2015). Two sides of the same coin: Preservice teachers' dispositions towards critical pedagogy and social justice concerns in rural and urban teacher education contexts. *Urban Review, 47*(4), 626-656.

Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implication of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist, 27*(1), 65-90.

Kızılçaoğlu, A. (2006). Eğitim fakültelerinde yeniden yapılandırma sürecine ilişkin eleştiriler ve öneriler [Critics and suggestion on redevelopment processes of colleges of education]. *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi [Balıkesir University The Journal of Social Sciences Institute], 8*(14), 132-140.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2009). Contextualizing the madness: A critical analysis of the assault on teacher education and schools. In S. L. Groenke & J. A. Hatch (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy and teacher education in the neoliberal era: Small openings* (pp. 19–36). Berlin: Springer.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2012). Critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: Evolution for survival. *Counterpoints, 422,* 147-183.

Korkmaz, H., (2013). Who becomes a science teacher educator in Turkey and the United States of America: A comparative study. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education,* Special Issue 1, 256-270.

Koster, B., Brekelmans, M., Korthagen, F., & Wubbels, T. (2005). Quality requirements for teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *21*(2), 157-176.

Lee, C. C., Akin, S., & Goodwin, A. L. (2019). Teacher candidates' intentions to teach: implications for recruiting and retaining teachers in urban schools. Journal of Education for Teaching, 45(5), 525-539.

Leistyna, P., Lavandez, M., & Nelson, T. (2004). Critical pedagogy: Revitalizing and democratizing teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 31*(1), 3-15.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Liston, D. R., & Zeichner, K. M. (1987). Critical pedagogy and teacher education. *Journal of education*, *169*(3), 117-137.

Loughran, J. (2014). Professionally developing as a teacher educator. *Journal of Teacher Education, 65*(4), 271-283.

Lunenberg, M., Korthagen, F., & Swennen, A. (2007). The teacher educator as a role model. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 586-601.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

McDonald, M., & Zeichner, K. (2009). Social justice teacher education. In W. Ayers, T. Quinn & D. Stovall (Eds.), *The handbook of social justice in education* (pp. 595-610). Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis.

McLaren, P. (2009). Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts. In A. Darder, M. P. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (pp. 61–83). New York, NY: Routledge.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Milner, H. R. (2003). Reflection, racial competence, and critical pedagogy: How do we prepare pre-service teachers to pose tough questions?. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, *6*(2), 193-208.

Murray, J., & Male, T. (2005). Becoming a teacher educator: Evidence from the field. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 21*, 125-142.

Nieto, S. (2000). Placing equity front and center: Some thoughts on transforming teacher education for a new century. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 180-187.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(3), 307-332.

Pajares, F. (1993). Preservice teachers' beliefs: A focus for teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education*, *15*(2), 45-54.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 102-119). New York: Macmillan.

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership.* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Shor, I. (1987). *Freire for the classroom: A sourcebook for liberatory teaching.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Shor, I. (1993). Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. In P. Leonard & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 24-35). New York, NY: Routledge.

Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Smith, K. (2003). So, what about the professional development of teacher educators? *European Journal of Teacher Education, 26*(2), 201-215.

Swennen, A., & Bates, T. (2010). The professional development of teacher educators. *Professional Development in Education, 36*(1-2), 1-7.

Swennen, A., Jones, K., & Volman, M. (2010). Teacher educators: Their identities, sub-identities and implications for professional development. *Professional Development in Education, 36*(1-2), 131-148.

Swennen, A., Lunenberg, M., & Korthagen, F. (2008). Preach what you teach! Teacher educators and congruent teaching. *Teachers and Teaching, 14*(5-6), 531-542.

Swennen, A., & Van der Klink, M. (2009). *Enhancing the profession of teacher educators. Becoming a teacher educator: Theory and practice for teacher educators.* The Netherlands: Springer.

Tatto, M. T. (1998). The influence of teacher education on teachers' beliefs about purposes of education, roles, and practice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 49*(1), 66-77.

Tunca, N., Şahin, S. A., Oğuz, A., & Güner, H. Ö. B. (2015). Qualities of ideal teacher educators. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(2), 122-148.

Ulubey, Ö., & Başaran, S., (2019). Evaluation of 2018 initial teacher training programs. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, 9*(2), 263-300.

Üstüner, M. (2004). Geçmişten günümüze Türk eğitim sisteminde öğretmen yetiştirme ve günümüz sorunları. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 5*(7), 63-82. Villegas, A. M. (2007). Dispositions in teacher education: A look at social justice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(5), 370-380.

Weinstein, C. S. (1990). Prospective elementary teachers' beliefs about teaching: Implications for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 6*(3), 279-290.

Yıldırım, A. (2011). Competing agendas and reform in teacher education. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, 1*(1), 1-17.

Yıldırım, A. (2013). Teacher education research in Turkey: Trends, issues and priority areas. *Education and Science, 38*(169), 175-191.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.