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Struggling to Teach Disadvantaged Students: The Role of Pre-service Education in Turkey

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Abstract
It is widely accepted that effective teachers can make the most significant difference to student learning, particularly for disadvantaged students. On the other hand, teacher education has a critical role in effective teaching. However, can preservice education in Turkey sustain its role in social justice, especially for disadvantaged students? The present study seeks to answer this question by focusing on the views of teachers of disadvantaged students. Most struggling areas while teaching disadvantaged students were uncovered, and the role of teacher education and educators was explained. The most typical finding is that teacher education's theory-based structure hinders teacher candidates from practicing their knowledge, which causes a shock for teachers when they first start doing their jobs in disadvantaged school districts. In the final part, how teacher education could be developed in this sense was discussed in light of social justice.

Key Words: Teacher education, teacher educators, disadvantage, disadvantaged students, social justice

Introduction

Education has a vital role in both individual and social domains. Therefore, it is widely accepted as a right rather than a privilege. However, within the last century, one of the critical focuses of the debate on education is its efficiency and effectiveness to provide real opportunities for those impaired by social stratification. Especially since the well-known Coleman report (1966), socioeconomic factors shaping an individual's place within and among the stratifications have been a starting point to research and interpret educational gaps between the wealthy and the poor. Today, while there is an enormous body of research repeating the same results with Coleman's team, critics denouncing the report as an interpretation of the underestimated role of teachers and schools in students' lives have also been increasing. The main point of these critics is that effective teachers can make the most significant difference to student learning, particularly for students of low socioeconomic backgrounds (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2002; Hattie, 2003). Then, addressing the quality of teaching has become a prominent pursuit of remediating the relationship between the students' performance and socioeconomic backgrounds (Hattie, 2003; OECD, 2017; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2002; Scholes et al., 2017).

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Haberman (1995, p.1) has asserted that "For the children and youth in poverty from diverse cultural backgrounds who attend urban schools, having effective teachers is a matter of life and death". Then the question arises: How can teachers be prepared effectively for teaching in challenging school contexts serving students from disadvantaged backgrounds? The answer would eventually take us to the teacher education programs responsible for teachers' preparation for their job, as the effectiveness of teaching is a well-known outcome of preservice education (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2005), which necessitates exploring the role of teacher education in closing the gap between students from low and high socioeconomic backgrounds. As the need for teachers who can successfully serve the diverse group of students has increased, teacher education programs, which are responsible for preparing teachers for oncoming tough situations, becomes more critical to take up the challenge of creating education for all (Lewis, 2017; Obidah & Howard, 2005; Price, 2002;). Indeed, we know that preparation is a critical factor in learning any profession's ropes, especially teaching. When it comes to teaching in schools of disadvantaged students, preparation plays a more vital role, as the teachers at those schools generally face a more challenging environment. Therefore, teacher education programs need to produce committed and capable teachers to provide inclusive education, especially for the disadvantaged (Akyeampong et al., 2018), to become a part of an equal society (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

However, several studies reveal that teacher education programs fail to provide the knowledge and the ability to teach diverse groups in society (Cochran-Smith, 2012; Melnick & Zeichner, 1997; Umar, 2006). Moreover, in most cases, fresh graduates of those failing programs are the ones who go into teaching in disadvantaged areas (Burnett, Lampert, Patton, & Comber, 2014; Reardon, 2011). In other words, the least experienced and not-well-prepared teachers are paired with the neediest students (Adams & Tulasiewicz, 2005; Burnett et al., 2014; Grossman & Loeb, 2010; Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002), which deepens the gap between low and high socioeconomic students (Akyeampong et al., 2018; Reardon, 2011). Then, teaching itself becomes an inhibitor for social justice.

In the context of Turkey, the same problem is obvious. There is a central recruiting system for teachers in Turkey, and the MoNE is responsible for assigning new teachers based on a central qualification exam and after an interview with candidates. In most cases, new graduate teachers are assigned to schools of the east and southeast of the country, mainly serving low socioeconomic-backgrounded students (OECD, 2019a). It is hard to see that the teacher recruitment system will change in the opposite way, i.e., new graduate teachers are assigned to better schools while the experienced teachers to the low socioeconomic ones in the near future. Generally, the policymakers' response is to increase the working force of teachers in terms of number. However, preparing and developing teachers to serve more effectively in disadvantaged areas is

often overlooked. Therefore, the present research focuses on 'beginner' teachers' experiences while working with disadvantaged students and tries to find out implications for teacher education in the framework of social justice. By finding answers to the following questions, the research promises to shed light on how teachers might best be prepared to teach in challenging and disadvantaged areas to foster social justice in education:

- How do new graduate teachers of disadvantaged students (TDS, hereinafter) interpret the notion of 'disadvantage'?
- What do TDS themselves think of the training they have received in the context of teaching disadvantaged students?
- Which points should be focused on in preservice teacher education to teach disadvantaged students from the perspective of TDS effectively?

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The present study begins by clarifying the concept of disadvantaged students. It then highlights the previous research on teaching and teacher education agenda in the perspective of social justice.

Disadvantaged students

'Disadvantage' in the school context can include many different attributions. However, the present literature mostly explicates the disadvantage in socioeconomic manners. The disadvantage is characterized by being a student from rural and urban poor areas (Dawson & Shand, 2019; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015;; Tatto, 1997; Price, 2002), minority ethnic groups (Dawson & Shand, 2019; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015; Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011; Tatto, 1997), speaking native languages other than instruction language, having special education needs or being recently migrated (Akyeampong et al., 2018). Other terms are used interchangeably with disadvantaged, such as 'high poverty schools' (Lampert & Burnett, 2016), 'culturally deprived' or 'at risk' (Weiner, 2006). The present study approaches the disadvantage as parental, social, and economic circumstances, which are disincentive factors for learning and development. The primary focus while discussing the disadvantage is students' socioeconomic position.

In Turkey, almost 33 % of children experience high poverty (Education Reform Initiative, 2021). While the Turkish education system aspires to provide the same educational opportunities for all students, especially for high-poverty students, there are still huge gaps between the students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, disadvantaged students are more likely to underperform when compared to other students. According to the PISA 2018 results, there were 9 % advantaged students, but only 1 % of disadvantaged students were labeled as top performers. Indeed, it is explicitly revealed that low and high-performing students are clustered in the same

schools more often than many other countries (OECD, 2019b). One of the main reasons for clustering was variation among students' social stratum and economic backgrounds, i.e., disadvantaged students were clustered in the same low-performing and high-poverty schools (Education Reform Initiative, 2021).

Regarding teaching structure, the literature reveals that disadvantaged students receive less effective teaching than other students (Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015; Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011; Max & Glazerman, 2014). In Turkey, many of the new graduate teachers are assigned to the most disadvantaged regions and schools (Çimen, 2021; Özoğlu, Gür, & Altunoğlu, 2013). Indeed, disadvantaged schools experience more teacher turnover (Özoğlu, 2015). Some schools do not have a chance to work with certified teachers; rather, their teachers are mainly out-of-field (Education Reform Initiative, 2021). Therefore, the learning environment of the disadvantaged students becomes more challenging, which raises concerns for social justice.

Teaching and Social Justice

According to the research of Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain (2002), being taught by an above-average teacher can eliminate disadvantages of low socioeconomic background. Therefore, teacher quality is widely accepted as a promise for disadvantaged students (Burnett & Lampert, 2011; Zhu & Han, 2006). The link between teacher quality and the academic and social development of disadvantaged students can be interpreted through the lens of social justice.

Social justice is a concept on which many different perspectives can be discussed. In the present research, Fraser's (2010) concept of parity of participation has been employed to understand social justice. She describes social justice as making social arrangements that support everyone to be a participant in social life. According to her, injustice can be overcome by destroying institutionalized barriers that prevent some from participating in social interaction equally. There are three types of obstacles to participatory parity as economic, social, and political. Economic barriers can be interpreted in a distributive perspective and are structures of the economy precluding some people from getting resources for social interactions. Some people can also suffer from status inequality and misrecognition due to institutionalized hierarchies of the cultural value of the society, which is understood as a social barrier focusing on status order. The political barriers are largely concerned with representation, underlining who is included in and excluded from just distribution and reciprocal recognition by the state's jurisdiction and decision rules.

In the perspective of social justice, teaching is interpreted as a way of integrating pedagogies and materials with inequalities in classrooms and schools. Thus, teachers' expectations for diversity, approaches for marginalized people, and knowledge and practices in challenging the inequality become more dominant teaching areas (Enterline et al., 2008). As Ludlow, Enterline and Cochran-Smith (2008) have asserted,

teaching in the framework of social justice requires knowledge about content, pedagogy, students, cultures, school systems, communities and self; ways of understanding of schooling process by integrating knowledge with beliefs, values, commitments, values and attitudes; practices of supporting students with special needs and from various socioeconomic backgrounds; and being a part of social movements to defend students' rights, especially of disadvantaged ones.

Fraser's approach can also be employed to define the quality of teaching in disadvantaged schools. It provides insights into what teachers need to know and learn about the context of their community (Scholes et al., 2017). Accordingly, there is a need to look forward to an equitable allocation of resources, including quality teaching, to achieve equal participation in social interaction. As a redistributive asset, quality teaching must be reached and provided for all students to challenge the gap between low and high socioeconomic students. On the other hand, the recognitive role of social justice urges teaching rearranged to be aware of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, lives, values, and experiences (Woods et al., 2014). By recognizing significant differences in the distribution of educational opportunities, teachers can effectively fight against injustice, standing in disadvantaged students' way in social participation (Enterline et al., 2008). In terms of political lens, Fraser's approach necessitates 'representation of voice' (Hargreaves, Buchanan, & Quick, 2021), emphasizing the diversity in the teaching force's socioeconomic background to disentangle the under-representation of the disadvantaged population.

Teacher Education for Social Justice

Most of the research in the teacher education field is criticised as they are products of traditional behaviourist theory, which neglects social dynamics of learning to teach primarily in disadvantaged areas (Oakes et al., 2002). A social justice perspective can be employed as an answer to that criticism. Teacher education for social justice intends to provide social, intellectual, and organizational contexts which are helpful to prepare teachers for a more just society (Enterline et al., 2008). If we consider Fraser's (2010) approach of social justice, then teacher education can be settled as a social arrangement tool to support students participating in social life. Therefore, teacher education must be arranged to ensure that quality of teaching is distributed equally to schools regardless of their socioeconomic context by preparing new teachers to challenge the inequalities of the society effectively; new teachers are aware of the social status barriers to be equal participants of society; and they are willing to take part in making disadvantaged students' voice heard. Zeichner (2009) similarly defines the role of teacher education for social justice by arguing that the mission of teacher education is to build a more just society by preparing teachers for the future so that they can effectively teach to all participants of society. Therefore, graduate teachers are expected to know how poverty and injustice are produced, how poverty can affect daily life and

the capacity to benefit from education, and how education can be set on to challenge societal inequalities (Comber & Woods, 2016). Indeed, the social justice framework provides a mission for teacher education institutes to prepare teacher candidates for the everyday realities of the classroom and dialog with the community, as well as content and pedagogical knowledge (Solomon, Allen, & Campbell, 2007).

Social justice in teacher education focuses on approaches working effectively to solve the problems of class diversity to eliminate the disadvantages of students getting equal opportunities and outcomes with their peers (Scholes et al., 2017). In light of Fraser's theory (2010), those approaches can be reviewed into two common aspects. One of the most shared aspects that can be identified as both recognition and representation parts of social justice is critical thinking which focuses on teacher candidates' ability to critic the norms, values, and beliefs influential in producing social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As the commitment to social justice requires a critical approach to current inequalities in society and understanding the ways to create socially just conditions (Westheimer & Kahne, 2007; Picower, 2011), teacher education programs need to prepare teachers who are aware of the current inequalities to challenge them for greater educational, economic, and social justice (Zeichner & Flessner, 2009). Being critical for the inequalities also involves developing political analyses linked to students' academic performance and educational opportunities and taking part in social action to transform society (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Teacher quality is the other aspect related to the distributive interpretation of social justice. As the disadvantaged schools which are facing the challenges of the injustice society first-hand, it is crucial for them to have well-prepared teachers who can beat the odds (Haycock, 2005) and are volunteer to teach in the disadvantaged communities (Longaretti & Toe, 2017; Scholes et al. 2017). When we consider that new graduate teachers are mainly work in disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2019a) then teacher education programs need to take a more crucial position to develop skills and knowledge of preservice teachers to understand what, why and how social justice education can be achieved (DeMink-Carthew, 2018). While preparing high-quality teachers for social justice, letting them be familiar with disadvantaged school contexts (DeMink-Carthew, 2018; Obidah & Howard, 2005) by constructing their knowledge and competence on practice in those contexts, sharing their experiences with other peers (Oakes et al., 2002) and hearing from in-service teachers and principals (Ailwood & Ford, 2017); experience research on poverty, diversity and other pedagogical aspects (Ailwood & Ford, 2017) especially by employing action research (Zeichner, 2009); build community relations by working together with families and other members of disadvantaged schools' context to identify local concerns (Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003; Yuan, 2018) and utilize different pedagogies to get positive learning outcomes for disadvantaged students (Forlin, 2010) are main discussed areas in the literature.

Methodology

The present study sought to understand the challenges faced by new teachers working in disadvantaged schools and the place of teacher education in providing knowledge and competence for new teachers to overcome those challenges effectively. To explore that, a basic interpretive qualitative research design (Merriam, 2002) was employed to get the opinions of new teachers about teacher education in the context of disadvantaged students.

Participants and context

The working group of the study involved twelve new graduate teachers working in disadvantaged schools. Following Patton (2014), a mix of sampling methods was employed by defining two criteria to get more concentrated thoughts about the research subject (criterion sampling), including participants who were suggested by others as matching the criteria (snowball sampling) and who could provide varied insights as they were graduated from different teacher education courses and working in different regions (maximum variation). There were two critics while selecting the participants: (i) teaching disadvantaged students (ii) for one to three years. 'At least one working year' critic was held as it was supposed that teachers needed time to get used to school and had experienced enough to understand and extrapolate from the challenges in teaching for disadvantaged students, while maximum three years working duration critic was set by taking into consideration that teachers' knowledge about the teacher education course they have taken might be unrecalled or outdated after three years. The detailed information about the participants is in Table 1:

Table 1.
Participants

Name	Gender	Branch	Exp. as the year	GPA	The intensity of disadvantaged students in school
Ada	F	Science	2	2.88	Mid
Bade	F	Religion	3	2.87	Mid
Cenk	M	Preschool	3	2.93	Mid
Dide	F	English	2	2.87	High
Elif	F	Classroom	3	3.50	High
Hale	F	Classroom	1	3.58	High
Kaan	M	Psychology	2	2.90	Mid
Lale	F	Mathematics	2	3.40	Mid
Mina	F	Classroom	2	3.82	High
Utku	M	Classroom	2	3.69	Mid
Pars	M	Turkish	2	3.40	Mid
Sila	F	Preschool	3	3.40	High

*All names are pseudonyms

All of the participants are still working in urban areas with limited school sources. Their students' parents are generally not educated or have little education. Socioeconomic status is very low, most of the fathers are workers or farmers, and mothers are housewives. Teachers' GPA varies between 2.87 to 3.82, and some of them like Mina, Lale and Hale have graduated with the highest degrees.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected by employing semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted by the researcher via Google Meet or telephone. The participants were mainly asked to share their experiences about teaching in disadvantaged schools and the effect of teacher education programs they graduated from while handling these experiences, and how teacher education could be developed to better train teachers for teaching in disadvantaged schools. The questions were prepared by taking field experts' opinions and pilot interviews were held with two teachers. There were two field experts, one studying on teacher education and the other on social justice. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. While analysing the raw data, a deductive content analysis protocol has been followed. Accordingly, patterns of meaningful units were gathered around themes specified before the analysis (Krippendorff, 2013).

Researcher's reflection

Before my academic career, I had worked as a teacher in a disadvantaged school for two years. The school was in a neighbourhood known for its high crime rates. Many of the students were living in below-average socioeconomic families, and the parents' education level was very low. When someone asked about my teaching experience, I would state my feelings like 'a fish out of water.' After two years of field experience as a teacher, I have worked as a research assistant in three different teacher education institutes, an experience which has lifted my concern about the role of teacher education programs in new teachers' struggling for disadvantaged students. Therefore, I can clearly state that I have witnessed the role of teacher education programs in preparing teachers for disadvantaged students both as a practitioner and a researcher. From my point of view, teacher education programs provide little contribution for new teachers to overcome the problems they face, especially in their first years.

Findings

The raw data were coded deductively by gathering the same meaningful units under specified themes. There were six main themes: (i) awareness of disadvantaged students, (ii) most struggling teaching areas, (iii) teacher education programs' role, (iv) teacher educators' role, (v) understanding social justice, and (vi) development of teacher education programs to serve disadvantaged students better. Under this section, categories and themes were presented with direct quotations of the participants to exemplify and explain their content. Direct quotations were originally Turkish and translated into English by the researcher himself.

Defining and identifying 'disadvantage'

In an effort to reveal the new teachers' awareness about the notion of 'disadvantaged,' participants were asked questions such as 'what can be a disadvantage for a child in an educational context? Teachers' answers have revealed eight categories as shown in Figure 1.

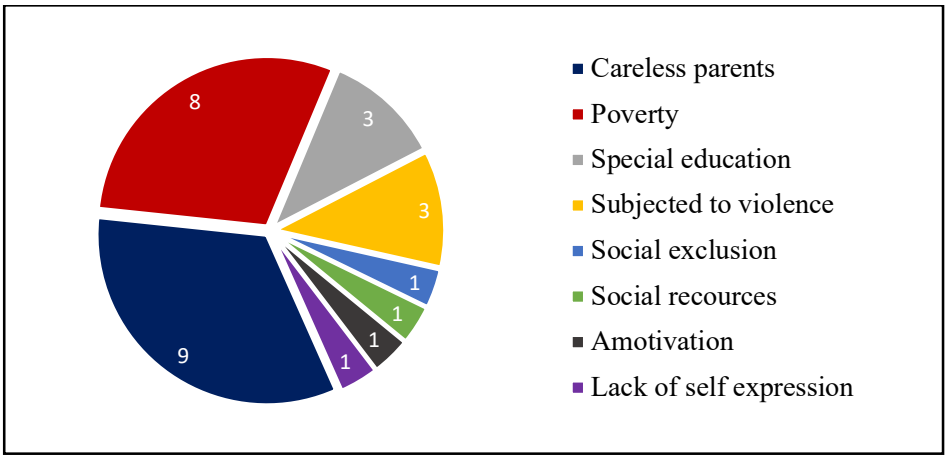

Figure 1. Concepts used to define disadvantage

As illustrated in Figure 1, most of the participants have defined the concept of disadvantage by relating it to 'careless parents' and 'poverty.' According to the teachers, disadvantage shows up when parents do not take the role in their children's education. In Sila's words, the disadvantage is *"being deprived of family support. For example, many parents never come to school to discuss their children's performance. They are unaware about what is going on in school.."* Poverty was the second most emerging category to defining disadvantage. According to Kaan, *"some students may not even have money to buy pencils or notebooks."* Lale was also supporting that by stating, *"disadvantage is very relevant to the economic condition of the family. Rich families have chance to enrol their children in private schools. But what if you do not have money?"*

Some teachers were putting 'special education' into the core of disadvantage. Utku has stated, *"for me, disadvantaged students may be the ones who need special education."* Some others were approaching disadvantages in terms of violence. In their view, the disadvantage is the amount of being subjected to violence, especially in the family. *"Some students experience violence in the family. Bullying by family is the point. Then, students face psychological disorders."* Ada was stating.

The other concepts asserted by a couple of teachers were being unable to reach social resources such as theatre, museum, or other social activities; being excluded from the society as a result of language, religion, or ethnics; lacking motivation and aim to learn; and experiencing communication gaps whereby not being able to express oneself.

Most struggling teaching areas

After revealing their way of sense-making about disadvantaged students, I have asked to TDS questions such as 'What is the most difficult part of teaching for disadvantaged students?' to understand which teaching areas they struggle to teach most. Teachers' answers were organized into nine categories (Figure 2).

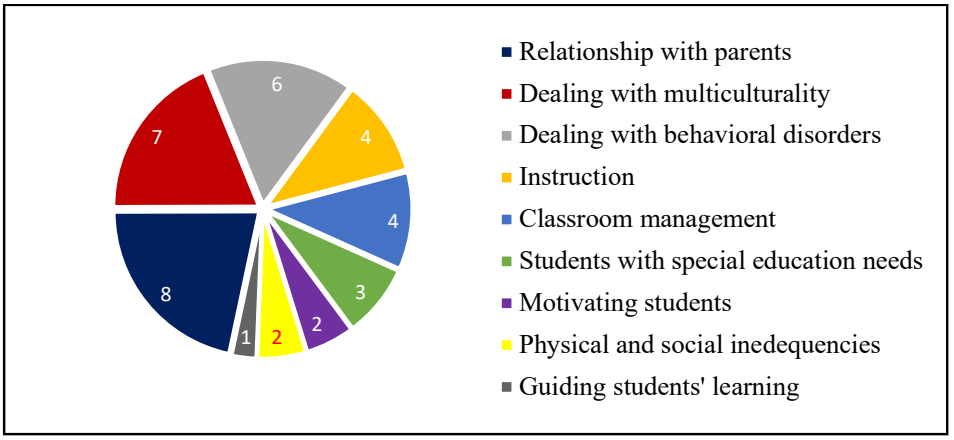

Figure 2. TDS's most struggling areas while teaching disadvantaged students

Figure 2 shows that new graduate teachers' most struggling area while teaching disadvantaged students is the relationship with parents. Many of the participants complained that they were experiencing difficulties while contacting with parents of disadvantaged students, as these parents have more tendency to leave their children by themselves in school. According to the participants, new teachers do not have the ability to attract parents to the school. For example, Utku stated, *"Especially in my first days in teaching, I was anxious about how to be successful when considering those parents who do not care much about their children."* On the other hand, Pars emphasized accountability of the parents in students' performance and asserted how he became helpless while communicating with them by speaking, *"Some parents accept me the only responsible person for their children's failure. But they are not thinking about their place even if I talk to them, which negatively affects me while teaching."*

Dealing with multi-cultural settings was the primarily second shared category. In this respect, new teachers explained how they felt desperate to teach students of minor ethnic groups or immigration. Three main codes were identified as language, culture, and composition. Talking about language, Cenk stated, *"We have students immigrated from Syria. They cannot speak Turkish and do not understand me. … I feel that I do not have much to do for these students."* Hale remarked on how she had difficulty in adopting the culture: *"We were planning to decorate a pine tree for the new year. One of the parents opposed and told me they never celebrated the new year and only*

planted roses. I was just shocked." Moreover, Pars stated, *"There is a disintegration in the school. Turkish and Syrian students from different groups. I have great difficulty in integrating them."*

Finding a solution for students' behavioural disruptions was another critical challenge for new teachers. Teachers talked about five behavioural disorders: violence, disrespect, bullying, slang language, and vandalism. However, the joint statement was about how they were shocked after witnessing those behaviours. In terms of violence, Bade asserted, *"Especially boys, they have scars on their arms. They are talking about how they fought. That is terrifying."* In Dide's words, *"when I treat them in a concerned way, then they become more spoiled. Therefore, I sometimes cannot adjust the balance."* implied the disrespectful behaviours of students. On the other hand, Hale commented on her helplessness about bullying: *"I cannot tolerate the peer bullying. I cannot react normally and show an exaggerated response. Sometimes, I forget that the bullies are just children."* Again, Dide stated, *"There was too much slang language in the classroom. I had enough of slang, but it still continued."* About vandalism, Elif's words were dramatic: *"These students give so much harm to the school. That was a disappointment for me. I try my best, but I get vandalism back as an answer."*

In terms of instruction, participants commented on their struggling experiences on improving disadvantaged students' performance to others' level, staying resilient in the case of failure, and using instruction time effectively to finish the course subject in a specified time. Besides, facing the challenges of inexperience was another part in this context, as Mina stated, *"They wanted me to teach first grades. That was very hard for me as I did not have any experience."*

One of the other struggling areas was classroom management brought up by Ada *"I cannot control their noise in the classroom. Then the students who are willing to listen to the course are distracted. That makes me feel powerless. I try new ways, but nothing changes"* Bade talked about how she struggled to motivate disadvantaged students to learn: *"We have some students here; they do not want to learn or be educated. Even if the performance is low, everyone wants to receive an education in my born city. But students come to school involuntarily. They say I will not study in a university; I will be a butcher or baker. ... Then it becomes more difficult to teach these students."* Some teachers also mentioned how they could become delicate to poor physical and social conditions. For example, Utku told *"The most challenging point while teaching those students is inadequate physical and social conditions. I cannot find any place which can be a substitute for out-of-school activities."* Moreover, a teacher mentioned that it was too difficult to educate and support students with special education needs, while another felt unqualified in guiding disadvantaged students' academic and social lives.

The role of teacher education programs

The third theme is related to new teachers' thoughts about the role of teacher education programs they have graduated from recently in facing the challenges of teaching in disadvantaged areas. The questions to elicit participants' views were basically focusing on their experiences in preservice teacher education. Teachers' answers can be summarised by Pars's words: *"When we first began to teach, we were like a fish out of water. I think, my own on-site teaching provides everything I have learnt about my job. We should have already learned the basics of teaching in the university, but?*

In line with Pars's quotation, before any other details, participants were asked to comment on whether or not core teaching areas were covered successfully in teacher education programs and effective in facing the challenges. In terms of subject field knowledge, only Utku conveyed his opinions in a negative way by commenting that he needed to study the subject before each lesson. The other participants commented that the subject field knowledge in preservice education was satisfying enough, setting apart some teachers who stated that subject field education was too intense and full of unnecessary and unemployed knowledge. However, knowledge about and competence in other core teaching areas provided in preservice teacher education was not appreciated. For example, most of the teachers criticised the theory-based pedagogy education. Ada explained, *"We have met with many learning and teaching methods. But they were only provided in theory. They lack practicability, especially in my school."* Classroom management courses were also attacked as they were theory-based in most cases. Similarly, participants did not have positive statements about knowing students' differences and guiding them. As Cenk stated, *"We were taught what we need to do in some specific situation in courses about guiding students. But when I began teaching in this school, I witnessed many different situations. What I learned in preservice education was useless at all."* Little contribution of teacher education programs was revealed for students who need special education. Most participants' thoughts were close to Bade, who conveyed, *"There was nothing about special education. Actually, I am afraid of making a mistake in this context. How should I treat students with special needs? I am always thinking about it."*, while only Dide and Elif were positive. 'How to communicate with parents' was the most compromised area that all participants complained about preservice education. Ada's words were striking, *"There was nothing about parents in my teacher education program. Everyone was pretending like parents were out of learning-teaching context and not reality."*

After getting teachers' views on teacher education programs' ability to educate them in core teaching areas, I have focused on the missing points. The findings were gathered basically around five categories and presented in Figure 3. Accordingly, there was a high consensus among TDS on teacher education programs' incapability to connect theory and practice and provide a practical internship.

One of the teachers' main concerns was the theory-based structure of their preser-

vice education, which undermines their capability in facing the challenges of teaching in disadvantaged schools. For example, Hale mentions her experience as *'The whole preservice education is nothing more than a huge amount of theory. There were so many theory-based courses. But, when I started to teach in this school, I realized that I knew nothing but theory. I needed to learn about how to practice only by my own efforts."* In a similar vein, Lale commented, *'Everything was so theoretical. Yes, we have learned information about teaching, but what about practicing them? That makes it teaching more difficult, especially for teachers like us."* Sıla's words were confirmative for other participants' views: *"Many theoretical things are basically different in practice. We might read course books about teaching, but we became shocked after meeting these students."*

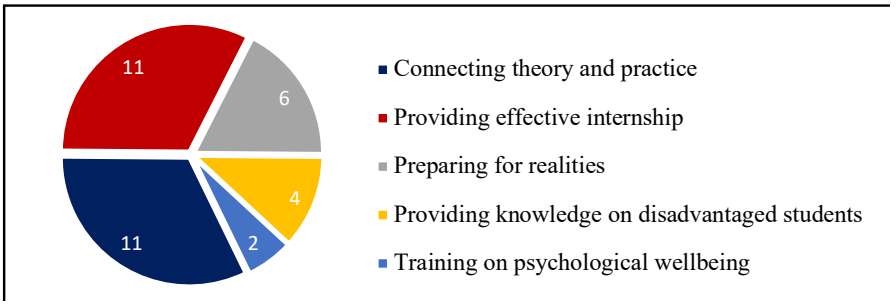

Figure 3. The role of teacher education programs

The internship was another most remarkable point that teacher education programs fail, according to the participants. Teachers' critiques on the internship can be reviewed into three codes: (i) inefficiency, (ii) insufficient time, and (iii) unilateral approach. Inefficiency relates to the incapability of teacher education programs in providing the chance to practice teaching. Half of the participants commented that their internship was just a formality that included much observation and little practice. Kaan adduced his reasons: *'The internship in my preservice education went for nothing. We did not learn anything about our job. We just went to school and signed some papers."* Remarking on little practice, Elif stated, *"We completed our internship, but it did not have anything about practicing the teaching. We were just observing the teachers. Can teaching be learned by just observing others?."* There were also participants censuring the duration of the internship as it was too short and limited. Sila's words can exemplify this critique: *"Internship was at only our last semester of preservice education, and it is only once a week, three-course hours. But I needed to be there for a longer time to really learn to teach."* Teachers were also aware that there was a unilateral approach while determining the schools for the internship, i.e., only schools in advantaged areas with better performing and more family-supported students. *"We couldn't do an*

internship in schools whose students were disadvantaged. Actually, all the schools for the internship were placed in city centers and educated students who already had many educational opportunities. We thought that all the students were similar to these advantaged ones. Then we were assigned to disadvantaged schools and became depressed by not being able to envision how to teach.," Utku stated.

In the third place, teacher education programs could not prepare teachers for the realities of schools whose students were mainly disadvantaged. In a nutshell, Ada's statement was to show how teacher education programs fail: *"Preservice education did not prepare us for the current situation. These students are not similar to my classmates. I can even say that I have never witnessed a student group like that. Of course, I was shocked once I encountered with them."* Similarly, Bade expressed, *"Preservice education just provides information on ideal and excellent classrooms. But these are not valid for my classroom. There are lots of negative variables. Preservice education is just utopic."*

According to some participants, preservice education is not well-performing in providing knowledge about disadvantaged students. Lale's experience with the parents was remarkable in this context. *"When I started to teach in this school, a parent visited me about his child's introversion. He asked me to give advice, and I advised him to enroll her daughter in a music course. The parent just said okay and disappeared. Then I thought about it and realized I had been mistaken. These children barely found money to buy pencils or notebooks; how could they pay for a music course? The university did not provide me any information about them."* On the other hand, teacher education programs are lack of training on psychological wellbeing. Some teachers complained about how it was challenging to maintain their mental health. They believed that teacher education programs had no contribution to them in that manner.

The role of teacher educators

After getting participants' views on teacher education programs, I have asked them to share their thoughts on teacher educators in terms of providing knowledge and competence for teaching disadvantaged students. The question was "How can you comment on your educators' capability in providing effective ways in facing the challenges you have met? Almost all participants were not positive about if teacher educators could really help them. According to them, with some exceptions in mind, most teacher educators were unaware of real practices in disadvantaged schools, theory-minded, unaware of the dynamics of teaching disadvantaged students, and careless about teacher candidates' learning (Figure 4).

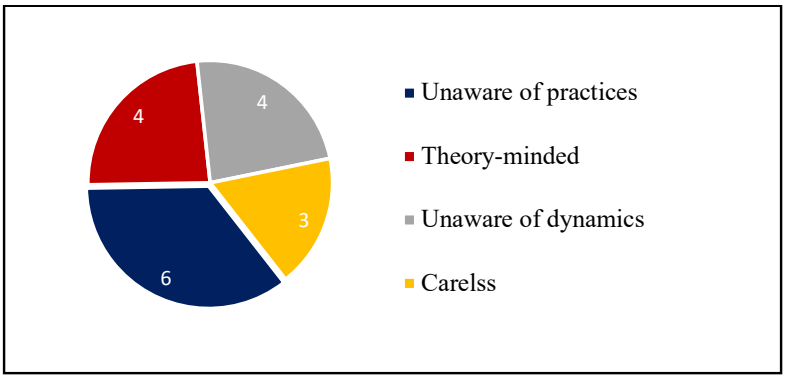

Figure 4. The role of teacher educators

Half of the participants have asserted that their educators were generally disconnected from practice. The main reason was expressed as many of the academicians had never taken a teaching role in schools, especially in disadvantaged ones. As a result, they were labeled as theory-minded lecturers who mastered the theory but did not practice it in real schools. Therefore, they were unable to bring their experiences about teaching into the courses of teacher education. As stated by Ada, *"Academicians could be competent in theory, but how much practical experience they had? I really wonder how they can react if they teach in our classrooms. They have never faced the challenges as we had, or they have never been a school like that."* and confirmed by Cenk, *"They have subject field knowledge, but they were out for the count in terms of school life."* teacher educators were perceived as out of practice and full of theory. Indeed, according to the findings, teacher educators were lack of knowledge about the dynamics of disadvantaged schools. Lale commented, *"I felt like they did not have anything about these schools. Their doctrine was always on utopias. I knew that many of them had never stepped in a disadvantaged school."* Again, Cenk stated, *"Consider family relations. They can communicate effectively with parents of schools in central areas. But if there is a disadvantaged parent, I think they probably do not know how to approach them."* Lastly, some teachers shared their experiences about teacher educators by expressing how they behave carelessly about their learning. Sila gave an example *"Many teacher educators' primary concern is coming and filling their time in the classroom. Read the books and change the slides; that was it."*

Understanding social justice

Apart from the roles of teacher education programs and teacher educators, I have asked to TDS an extra question about whether or not they meet a concept such as 'social justice' or any other relevant context during the preservice education. The aim was to reveal participants' knowledge and previous experiences if there are any. However,

only Ada has stated that she heard about the concept but cannot say anything about its meaning and context. Bade reported she barely knew the concept but could not comment on it. None of the other participants could give any answer, and they were just stating, 'No, there was nothing like social justice in my preservice education.'

How teacher education needs to be developed

In the last part of the interviews, participants were asked how to develop teacher education so as to respond to teachers' needs in teaching disadvantaged students. In line with previous themes, participants' suggestions were gathered around ten categories illustrated in Figure 5.

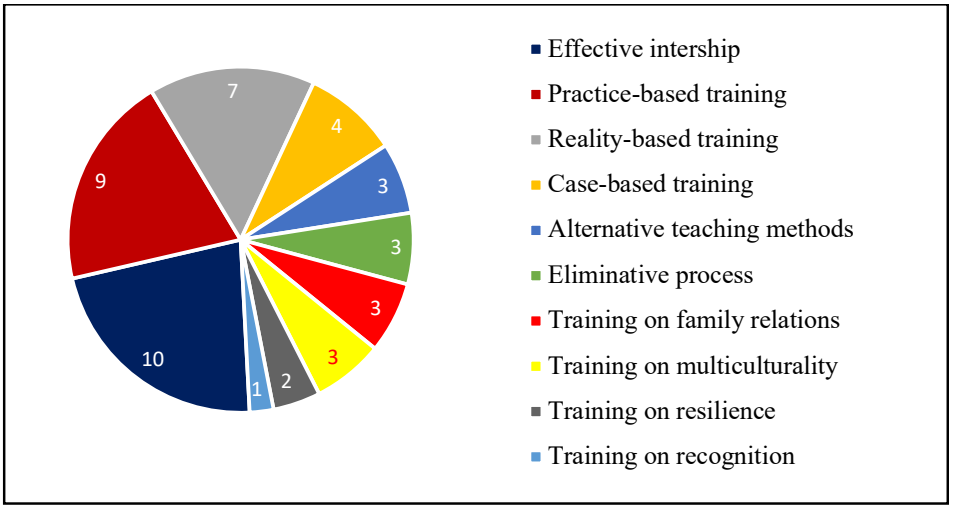

Figure 5. Needs for development of teacher education

Similar to the previous theme, the most concerned area of teacher education to be developed was the internship. Teachers' suggestions about the internship were (i) extending the duration, (ii) including different types of schools, and (iii) giving more chance to practice teaching. As Cenk stated, *"Internship needs to be started in the first year of preservice education. We could have observed the teachers, students, and school in our first two years. Then in the forthcoming years, we could have practiced what we have learned and observed,"* the period of internship needs to be longer. After commenting on how she faced many problems in her first years of teaching, Elif suggested about the internship: *"I finished my internship in a central school. But I wish I had done my internship in a school similar to the one I am teaching now. In this way, I could have accommodated myself to the circumstances of disadvantaged schools."* On the other hand, Dide remarked on limited practice by stating, *"I wish we had more chance to teach, practice what we have learned in university. I was at a loss when I*

first came to this school. If I had more chance to practice during my internship, I could be more confident."

Almost all participants commented on more practice-based training in preservice education. They suggested transforming the theory of everything into 'practice of everything' to overcome the challenges they faced. Mina stated, *"We needed more practice. There must be much more practice-based courses, microteaching as an example."* Some teachers were aware of the difficulty of providing every aspect of teaching based on practice in preservice education. Their suggestion was case-based training which required providing cases about the subjects; as Elif mentioned, *"Even if we didn't have enough time and sources to practice everything, there might be precedents that lead us thinking and working on schools' problems. So, we could have come with solutions that would be useful for us now."* Similarly, teachers commented on how preservice education must rely on realities rather than ideals. As revealed in previous themes, according to the many participants, preservice education was based on ideals, but the reality could only be seen after starting to teach. Ada has stated, *"There may be a training to provide information about the students' profile that we would meet in the future. I have never dreamed myself teaching a school like that. At least we could have been informed about the existence of these schools, and we could have prepared us for what was coming."*

Providing alternative teaching methods and techniques was suggested as another development area. Some participants expressed their need to find alternative, entertaining and attractive ways to maintain learning, especially for disadvantaged students. Hale commented, *"We need to improve ourselves regarding methods and techniques. Common methods are of no use here. Our students are already deprived of family support; therefore, we need to present our instruction in various ways to make them understand."* Apart from various methods and techniques, some participants expressed preservice education must cover issues such as teachers' relationships with parents, multiculturality, how to become resilient, and recognition of different needs and abilities of disadvantaged students. For example, Sila remarked on family relations: *"There might be some courses about parents based on sample cases. Or we could have participated in a parent-teacher meeting during our internship. They could have taught us how to communicate with different parents."* About multiculturality, Pars commented: *"Every school has immigrant students. How can I teach them? They don't know any Turkish, so do I have to give up and leave them to their dark world? I think teacher education programs need courses on multiculturality and teaching Turkish to immigrant students."* Ada was remarking on how it was essential to develop skills to become a resilient teacher by stating, *"this is a tough job. The students are not well-performing, and we have limited time, resources, support, etc. I don't know how to maintain my mental health. I think my preservice education must have provided that knowledge about the mental health of ourselves."*

Some participants also commented on the need for a more elective system in teacher education. Their perspective was about observing teacher candidates with an eagle eye to understand who qualified for teaching. Bade's words are explanatory: *"Everyone cannot be a teacher. There must be a more elective process in preservice teaching. While considering a teacher candidate, the question must be clearly answered: Can s/he really teach students? Can s/he contribute to the learning of disadvantaged students? Unfortunately, it is complicated to give positive answers to these questions."*

Discussion

How teachers can be best prepared for teaching disadvantaged students in parallel with social justice is of central concern to the present study. The study began with unveiling new graduate teachers' perception and knowledge of disadvantage, which is one of the crucial elements in social justice education. Then, teachers' most struggling areas while teaching disadvantaged students, the role of teacher education programs, inferences about teacher educators, and the rooms for development of teacher education were presented, respectively. In the present section, the findings were interpreted in light of Fraser's social justice framework focusing on three parity of participation concepts: distribution, recognition, and representation (Fraser, 2010).

Most of the participants interpreted the disadvantage by utilizing poverty, special education, and social exclusion, which are already discussed in the literature (Akyeampong et al., 2018; Lampert & Burnett, 2016; Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015). However, participants did not share any aspect about minority ethnic groups (Tatto, 1997) or cultural deprivation (Weiner, 2006). Moreover, it was explicit that new graduate teachers' imagination of disadvantage was primarily based on results rather than reasons of social injustice. The most common interpretation about disadvantage was 'careless parents.' There were others such as being subjected to violence, amotivation to learn, and lack of self-depression, which are actually output rather than initiators of disadvantaged backgrounds. Accordingly, we can infer that new graduate teachers' knowledge about disadvantaged students and how society produces disadvantage is limited. However, Fraser's recognition and representation concepts highly rely on knowledge about norms, values and beliefs that are effective in creating social inequalities. New graduate teachers should have been aware of how disadvantage is produced so as to criticize it and sound for disadvantaged students. Thus, we can discuss that teacher education in Turkey fails in its role in providing recognition and representation attributes of parity of participation.

Teachers reported how they struggled while teaching disadvantaged in many different teaching areas such as relationship with parents, multiculturality, behavioural disorders of students, instruction, classroom management, special education, providing motivation, physical and social inadequacies, and guiding students' learning, and

commented on the role of teacher education and educators. These areas were also revealed in other studies (e.g., Akyeampong et al., 2018; Cochran-Smith, 2012; Obidah & Howard, 2005). Suppose we adopt Fraser's social justice framework into teacher education. In that case, new graduate teachers must have experienced only little struggle as teacher education is expected to make social arrangements to support disadvantaged students to be equal participants of social life by providing effective preservice education for TDS. However, we can see that new graduate teachers are facing many challenges hindering disadvantaged students have a qualified education. Clearly, teacher education does not perform well in this context, which shows its failure in an equal distribution. Although teaching in disadvantaged schools requires adapting oneself to the harsh demands of these schools, teachers generally lack pedagogy of disadvantage (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Forlin, 2010; Haycock, 2005). Therefore, it is evident that teacher education in Turkey also fails in the distributive aspect of parity of participation.

The subsequent findings of the study can reveal how teacher education fails in terms of all three components of social justice. Considering theory-based structure and internship practices, the findings show us how teacher education cannot provide quality teaching to every disadvantaged student by failing to train TDS to become sufficient for those students. Indeed, teacher education fails to contribute to new graduate teachers' understanding of disadvantaged students. Participants were complaining about theory-based training that lacks fundamental teaching practices and the inefficient and insufficient nature of the internship, which would lead to a breakdown for distributive justice. Moreover, the unilateral nature of the internship obviously did not contribute recognition and representation of injustice as it deliberately showed only the 'tails' of the coin and avoided the 'heads.' In other words, new graduate teachers' way of understanding society was primarily circled around advantaged schools at which they had completed their internship. Recognition and representation of injustice were also swept aside by preservice education's living in an ivory tower and not providing helpful information about disadvantaged students. Providing knowledge about only ideal classrooms and schools would cause new graduate teachers' lack of understanding of the fundamental social disparities. However, as Burnett and Lampert (2011) have revealed, concepts of social justice can be taught to teachers who are not familiar with the disadvantages of students.

According to the participants, teacher educators also did not contribute much to their first challenging years of teaching. Teacher educators were labeled as unaware of practices, theory-minded, unaware of school dynamics and careless. This finding shows the role and responsibility of the teacher educators in new graduate teachers' struggling to teach disadvantaged students. As Obidah and Howard (2005) asked, how teacher educators who are not familiar with disadvantaged school sites can effectively prepare teachers to teach in these schools? Therefore, there is a need for teacher educators to address their own practices in their lectures. However, it would be deceptive if

we throw the book at only teacher educators, as the structure of organizations can have a substantial effect on the beliefs and behaviour of its members (Mintzberg, 1993). In this context, it will be much more appropriate to discuss how to direct teacher educators' efforts to prepare teacher candidates for a challenging job and make them aware of social justice-related teacher education issues.

When we review the findings on suggestions for developing teacher education so as to serve disadvantaged students better, and thereby to social justice, it is easy to see similarities between participants' suggestions and social justice education literature. This presents us that new graduate teachers may be more aware of how to develop teacher education than their educators or policymakers. Their experiences are worth to discover for providing a more quality education to disadvantaged students. For example, participants suggested extending the time in the internship to become more familiar with the school context, including different types of schools in the internship, providing more chance to practice with alternative teaching methods, preparing them for the realities, case-based learning, training on multiculturality, family relations, resilience and recognition. Most of these suggestions have already been discussed as being useful for better serving disadvantaged students in the literature. For example, according to Oakes et al. (2002), if novice teachers can encounter multiple learning settings, they can develop more competency and better skills to handle the problems while teaching different school contexts. Sleeter (2008) called for placing teacher candidates in challenging settings in preservice education to understand the needs and dynamics, and practice better and prepare them for everyday realities. Longaretti and Toe (2017) call for providing an understanding of disadvantaged students by focusing on relationships between school communities, children's backgrounds, individual needs, parents and poverty. Indeed, some of these suggestions have already been a part of teacher education programs in some developed and high performing countries such as Australia (Burnett & Lampert, 2011), China (Yin, Dooley, & Mu, 2019), Finland (Sahlberg, 2010), USA (Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003), which are producing effective results. Along with the suggestions in the present study, these practices of some countries may provide a benchmarking process for countries that are not focusing on teacher education for social justice yet.

Conclusion

The field of teacher education is as responsible as other fields in reaching a more just society to serve students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is almost little chance to change the current poverty and low socioeconomic structure of the families. These are genuine circumstances in most of the disadvantaged schools. However, there may be a chance to change some practices while preparing teacher candidates for these students to provide them with a much more quality education. To beat the odds, teacher candidates must be aware of how injustice is produced and af-

fect their future disadvantaged students at first hand. They must also be equipped with the competence, knowledge, and strategies to successfully accept and overcome the challenges they face in these schools. The supply of new teachers is obviously not a concrete solution contributing to social justice by itself; instead, there must be policies offering well-prepared and volunteer teachers for disadvantaged students. Therefore, a need for a broader conception of teacher quality counting in teaching disadvantaged students is explicit.

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