EXPLORING TEACHER-EDUCATORS' AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ON WRITTEN FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: This study investigates the effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF) in teacher education, focusing on the gap between pedagogical beliefs and practices. It highlights that pre-service teachers prefer direct feedback due to limited training and high workloads, while teacher-educators encounter challenges such as misalignment between beliefs and actual practices. Contextual factors, like time constraints, further complicate effective feedback. The aim is to address these gaps and enhance feedback practices in teacher education programs.

Methodology: This qualitative case study explored beliefs and self-reported practices regarding WCF among teacher-educators and pre-service teachers in B.Ed. programs in Sindh and Punjab, Pakistan. Through semi-structured interviews with 12 participants (six teacher-educators and six pre-service teachers), researchers examined how feedback practices are influenced by educational contexts and assessed the implementation and effectiveness of WCF.

Findings: The study reveals differing views on written feedback effectiveness. Pre-service teachers value grammar-focused feedback, while teacher-educators prefer a comprehensive approach addressing content and structure. Emotional impacts are significant, with pre-service teachers frustrated by vague

or overly critical comments. The findings stress the need for clear, constructive feedback that balances criticism with encouragement to support learning and development.

Significance: This research provides insights into the impact of feedback clarity and emotional tone on pre-service teachers' engagement and learning. It emphasizes the need for supportive and constructive feedback practices and highlights the importance of professional development in aligning feedback practices with educational philosophies. The study aims to contribute to more effective teaching and learning by addressing both cognitive and emotional dimensions of feedback.

Keywords: Students' beliefs, teachers' beliefs, self-reported practices, written corrective feedback, teacher-educators, pre-service teachers.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is crucial for improving the writing skills of both students in general and pre-service teachers (as students and professionals in training) by providing insights into their performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Fan & Ma, 2018; Wisniewski et al., 2020). It guides learners through active engagement with diverse input sources (Carless & Boud, 2018). Contemporary approaches, unlike traditional views of feedback as a passive 'gift' from the teacher (Carless & Winstone, 2023), see it as an interactive, collaborative process that fosters development through ongoing dialogue and reflection (Ajjawi & Boud, 2015; Molloy & Carless, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). Dawson et al. (2018) support this view, describing feedback as a process where learners actively interpret and use information to improve their work and strategies. Together, these perspectives highlight that effective feedback involves both reflective dialogue and active learner engagement, positioning feedback as a continuous, dynamic interaction between learners and educators (Nicol, 2010; Leung et al., 2020, 2022).

In terms of teacher education programmes, Feuerherm (2012) postulates the importance of reflecting on the "positioning enacted in the written feedback as well as the embodiment of the teacher's history and developing identity within the teaching profession" (p. 151), suggesting the far greater role that teacher educators (TEs) need to play when it concerns WCF. She further elucidates that TEs must have "an awareness of institutional policies, developing

teacher identities, and the dialogue of written feedback" that are crucial in "instructing future writing teachers" (Feuerherm, 2012, p. 151). These would lead pre-service teachers (PSTs) to,

> …. an idealized world in which they see teachers of writing as those who see beyond writing as a series of steps to the understanding of writing as an ever-evolving process which develops as they write, read, and engage with other writers about their writing and reading
>
> (Raymond et al., 2019, p. 18)

Such experiences above would facilitate PSTs to develop identities and authentic voices as writers, because "we have to see ourselves as writers if we are to teach writing well" (Routman, 2015, p. 35), whereby the experiences gained could be a form of meaningful and appropriate scaffolding for PSTs (Kelleci Alkan et al., 2024).

Although such ideal situations are necessitated in teacher education programmes, significant gaps persist between pedagogical beliefs and the effective implementation of written corrective feedback (WCF) practices among teacher-educators and pre-service teachers (PSTs). Research consistently shows that PSTs often struggle to align their feedback practices with their theoretical knowledge. For example, Guénette and Lyster (2013) and Agustiningsih and Andriani (2021) observed that learners often depend on direct corrective feedback. This reliance is attributed to several challenges, including insufficient experience and training, as well as constraints such as limited time and high student workload, which hinder the effective implementation of indirect feedback strategies. As a result, PSTs favor the straightforward and immediate nature of direct corrections over the more complex and time-consuming indirect methods (Van Rooij et al., 2019; Smith & Lowe, 2021). This reliance on direct feedback reveals a disconnect between theoretical understanding and practical application, emphasizing the need to bridge the gap between pedagogical beliefs and their execution in practice.

Similarly, this gap is evident in the discrepancy between TEs' beliefs and their actual practices; although educators may believe they primarily provide direct feedback, research indicates that their feedback methods often involve more indirect approaches (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). This misalignment between beliefs and practices is further exacerbated by Asregid et al. (2023) as they identify key issues with feedback in teacher education, including an over-reliance on evaluation criteria for initial feedback, limited dialogic and feed-forward feedback, and insufficient opportunities for meaningful reflection. These challenges inhibit PSTs' ability to improve and engage deeply in reflective practices.

Additionally, contextual factors such as time constraints and excessive workloads limit educators' ability to deliver effective feedback (Boud, 2019; Cheng et al., 2021; Paris et al., 2022). Further illustrating this issue, Wilcoxen and Lemke (2021) highlight significant limitations in current feedback practices within teacher preparation programs. Their research identifies problems with teacher educators' feedback timeliness, purposefulness, and delivery, advocating for a shift to more dialogic feedback approaches. This finding supports the broader concern that feedback needs to evolve from a simple evaluation to a dynamic, interactive process. Further illustrating this issue, the mismatch between students' feedback preferences and their teacher's practices do transpire (Reguieg & Hamitouche, 2022), as their feedback methods do not always align with learners' inclination to receive detailed and immediate corrections. This misalignment underscores a broader concern about the evolving nature of feedback, which has progressed to include not only guidance for improvement but also an interactive, dialogic process where students actively engage in evaluating their own performance (Dawson et al., 2018). This progression from basic assessment to a collaborative feedback model entails active PSTs' participation and reflective dialogue with TEs. Such dialogue facilitates a two-way interaction (Carless & Winstone, 2023) where PSTs and TEs collaboratively engage in ensuring feedback is tailored to students' needs and preferences. This facilitates the closing of the gap between current performance and potential, fostering significant student growth and development. Hence, feedback is no longer a one-way communication but a dynamic process that supports students as active agents in their learning, aligning with their development as reflective learners and self-evaluators (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2015; Carless & Winstone, 2023).

Integrating interactive and dialogic feedback into practice often remains inconsistent due to entrenched practices, institutional constraints, and inadequate training (Carless, 2015; Dawson et al., 2018; Unlu, 2020). Studies reveal that while the shift towards more collaborative feedback is acknowledged, its practical application is hampered by factors such as limited institutional support and insufficient resources (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Unlu, 2020; Paris et al., 2022). Studies on general teaching and learning, which are applicable to teacher education programs, reveal how feedback practices can fall short of addressing diverse student needs. Jiang and Sukying (2024) demonstrate that distinct engagement patterns with written corrective feedback (WCF) exist among low-proficiency (LP) and high-proficiency (HP) students, with LP students often experiencing frustration and HP students engaging more constructively. This discrepancy, analyzed through theoretical frameworks such as sociocultural, social cognitive, and complex dynamic systems theories underscores the need for feedback strategies tailored to

students' proficiency levels. Other studies implemented in Pakistan and in other countries on PSTs and TEs too exemplify the gap between theoretical insights and practical implementation (Akbar et al., 2013; Asregid et al., 2023; Esfandiari & Husseini, 2023) reinforcing the necessity for further research to adapt feedback practices effectively across different educational contexts. Hence this study aims to examine the following research questions.

1. What are the beliefs and self-reported practices of teacher-educators regarding written corrective feedback?
2. What are the beliefs of pre-service teachers about the written feedback they receive from their teachers?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF) in second language (L2) learning is a complex and debated issue, reflecting both theoretical and practical challenges. Truscott's (1996) critique posits that WCF may hinder language acquisition and lead to error fossilization, challenging the notion that all feedback is beneficial. This critique underscores the necessity for a critical evaluation of how feedback practices impact language development. In contrast, targeted written corrective feedback (WCF) that addresses specific grammatical issues unique to each learner has been shown to significantly improve L2 writing accuracy (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Cheng et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021). These findings advocate for context-specific feedback strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach (Hyland, 2013). This necessity for tailored approaches underscores the role of teachers' beliefs in shaping how feedback is applied in practice. According to Borg (2015b), teachers' beliefs are integral to shaping instructional practices and feedback application. Beliefs influence how feedback types—such as direct, indirect, and metalinguistic—are implemented in the classroom (Ellis, 2009; Hassan et al., 2022). Despite the theoretical advantages of these feedback types, their practical effectiveness remains contested (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Rasool et al., 2022).

Broader pedagogical frameworks and institutional goals also play a significant role in shaping feedback practices, often overshadowing individual learner needs. Sanchez and Donnini Rodrigues (2024) argue that institutional priorities heavily influence feedback practices, a perspective supported by Hill and Ducasse, (2022) who observed that feedback frequently reflects institutional goals rather than addressing specific learner needs. Dawson et al. (2018) further note a disconnect between feedback's pedagogical rigor and its effectiveness in meeting students' practical and emotional needs, highlighting the need for more engaging

and aligned feedback. Practical constraints such as time, training, and institutional policies also hinder effective WCF implementation and these constraints disrupt the alignment between feedback practices and educators' beliefs by forcing educators to prioritize institutional goals over individual learner needs (Ellis, 2009; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). Consequently, these limitations often lead to feedback practices that fail to address specific learner requirements or support their learning objectives effectively.

Effective WCF further depends on addressing practical constraints and understanding the nuanced needs of PSTs. They often stress the importance of practical and detailed feedback that aligns with their previous experiences, as noted by Borg (2015a) and Nagode et al. (2014). Such feedback preferences are influenced by these experiences (Black & Nanni, 2016), and the necessity of detailed, personalized feedback to align with these preferences (Dawson et al., 2018). Emotional tone and feedback literacy are also crucial for enhancing WCF effectiveness. Studies show that emotional tone affects feedback reception and student engagement (Winstone & Boud, 2019; Trisdayanti et al., 2024), while feedback literacy and a collaborative approach foster active student involvement (Winstone et al., 2017). The studies show that addressing practical constraints like time and varying proficiency levels through peer assessment and efficient feedback tools can support both students and educators (Henderson et al., 2019).

This study integrates Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory and cognitive theory to analyze beliefs and practices related to written corrective feedback (WCF). Vygotsky's theory emphasizes social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as crucial for cognitive growth, suggesting that feedback serves as a scaffold to aid learner progression (Vygotsky, 1978; Bonsu, 2021).

Vygotsky's theory is chosen as one of the framework as it emphasizes social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as crucial for cognitive growth, as we would like to identify how feedback serves as a scaffold to aid learner progression (Vygotsky, 1978; Bonsu, 2021). We are undertaking this effort since many researchers agree that, when utilized effectively within the ZPD, it plays a significant role in enhancing learners' writing skills and overall cognitive growth. Fithriani (2019) demonstrates that written feedback not only improves writing quality and skills but also fosters critical thinking and learner autonomy, extending students' ZPDs through social interactions. Additionally, Van der Kleij (2022) introduces an instructional model based on Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes scaffolded learning and feedback literacy, providing a structured approach for both students and teachers. This model highlights how feedback can guide learners through developmental stages and supports the importance of social interaction in the feedback process. These studies affirm the

relevance of Vygotsky's theory in analyzing and optimizing the effects of feedback in educational settings, and may prove useful for TEs and PSTs.

The cognitive theory, as articulated by Borg (2006), examines how teachers' cognitive processes shape their feedback practices. Borg highlights that while professional coursework and classroom experience impact teacher cognition, prior learning experiences—particularly schooling—have a pronounced effect (Borg, 2015a). Borg (2003) asserts that "programmes that disregard trainee teachers' long-held beliefs may be less effective at influencing these" (p. 81). The bidirectional relationship between teachers' cognition and classroom practices, influenced by contextual factors such as institutional demands and social constraints, further underscores the complexity of aligning instruction with teachers' beliefs (Borg, 2006). While Vygotsky's concept of ZPD emphasizes the gap between independent performance and potential development achievable with guided support (Vygotsky, 1978), the Cognitive Theory highlights the need to integrate theoretical understanding with practical application in written corrective feedback strategies, which is one of the aims of the current study.

In summary, while existing literature provides valuable insights into written corrective feedback (WCF), several significant gaps remain. First, there is insufficient understanding of how teachers' beliefs about WCF translate into practical feedback practices, underscoring the need for a deeper examination of how theoretical models align with actual classroom implementation. Additionally, the influence of broader pedagogical frameworks and institutional goals on feedback practices has not been fully explored, particularly in terms of how these factors may overshadow individual learner needs and practical constraints. Furthermore, there is a need for more comprehensive research into how student-teachers' beliefs about the feedback they receive align with their actual experiences. Addressing these gaps is essential for refining WCF strategies, ensuring that feedback practices are both theoretically sound and practically effective. Hattie and Timperley (2007) promulgate this by the idea that the integration of "theoretical insights with practical experience can bridge the gap between what is known and what is done, ensuring that practices are both grounded in sound principles and effective in real-world applications" (p. 88). This notion is well supported by recent research, such as Zhang and Mao's (2023) who highlights the significance of integrating theoretical frameworks with practical feedback practices. Their study illustrates how a well-structured, theory-based approach to feedback can lead to substantial improvements in students' feedback literacy and writing skills. By applying theoretical principles to real-world teaching contexts, Zhang and Mao (2023) provide evidence that such integration enhances both

the effectiveness of feedback strategies and the practical experiences of learners, thereby reinforcing the necessity of this approach in educational settings.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Context

This study examined the beliefs and practices of TEs and PSTs regarding WCF within Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab, Pakistan. It explores how feedback practices are shaped by the educational contexts in these regions and how the B.Ed. program equips future teachers with essential skills, including effective feedback techniques. According to Bhangu et al. (2023), a case study could be a close examination of people, issues, and programs. Utilizing a case study approach, the research investigated participants' experiences and interpretations of WCF, offering a detailed analysis of how feedback is perceived and applied in these specific educational settings (Meriam, 2002; Bhangu et al., 2023).

3.2 Participants

The study selected twelve participants using purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013). The participants comprised six teacher-educators and six pre-service teachers (PSTs) within Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs. The purpose of selecting teacher-educators was to gain insights into both the theoretical and practical aspects of written corrective feedback (WCF), while PSTs provided perspectives on how feedback impacts their learning and development. This dual approach ensured a comprehensive analysis of their beliefs and self-reported WCF practices, identifying gaps between the views of teachers and students. These are lacking in literature, and hence, this current study represents a significant innovation and contribution to the field, addressing a notable gap in the literature by exploring how these newly reformed educational contexts influence WCF practices and beliefs.

TEs were chosen based on four criteria: (1) consent to participate in an interview, (2) a minimum of three years of experience teaching writing to B.Ed. students, (3) possession of qualifications such as a Master of Education (M.Ed.) or a degree related to English Language Teaching (ELT), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), or a Master of Arts in English, and (4) completion of training through in-service programs conducted by the US-AID Pre-STEP project. PSTs were selected based on the following criteria: (1) consent to participate in an interview, (2) enrollment in their final semester of the B.Ed. program, (3) completion of courses related to English within the B.Ed. program, such as communication,

literacy, and academic writing, and (4) experience with thesis writing. This selection process ensured that participants had the relevant experience and qualifications to provide valuable insights into WCF within B.Ed. programs.

The identities of the participants of this study were identified using pseudonyms (Table 1). The table of participants' demographics highlights several key trends. There is a significant age difference between TEs and PSTs, with the former ranging from 38 to 50 years and the latter from 22 to 24 years. This disparity underscores a variation in experience levels between the two groups. Gender distribution also differs, as the TE group is predominantly male (five out of six), while the PST group is balanced with an equal number of males and females (six each). Both groups are evenly represented from Sindh and Punjab provinces of Pakistan, suggesting a well-rounded regional perspective.

Table 1: Participants' demographics

Category	S. No	Participants	Age	Gender	Province
Teacher-Educators	1	Zakia	38	Female	Sindh
	2	Faraz	42	Male	Sindh
	3	Khurram	45	Male	Sindh
	4	Imran	50	Male	Punjab
	5	Daad	44	Male	Punjab
	6	Shoukat	48	Male	Punjab
Student-Teachers	7	Akram	22	Male	Sindh
	8	Razia	23	Female	Sindh
	9	Ghulam	22	Male	Sindh
	10	Rehana	24	Female	Punjab
	11	Zahida	23	Female	Punjab
	12	Babar	22	Female	Punjab

3.3 Instrument, Daat Collection, and Data Analysis

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interview

This instrument is chosen for its capacity to explore participants' insights and beliefs about teaching practices, particularly in writing instruction (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). This method

was effective in probing intangible aspects such as beliefs and emotions, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of written feedback practices (Hyland, 2013). The interview guide, adapted from Al-Bakri (2016), included sections on background information, beliefs about written corrective feedback (WCF), actual WCF practices, and challenges. It was piloted and revised based on feedback to ensure that the questions were more specific and concrete, thereby enhancing the guide's ability to capture detailed and relevant data aligned with the study's objectives and cultural context. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involved six phases: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. The researchers immersed themselves in the data, segmenting it into codes and grouping similar codes into themes. Themes were refined in collaboration with experts, cross-checked for consistency, and verified through member checking with participants (Birt et al., 2016). Reflexivity was maintained through ongoing self-reflection and peer feedback, enhancing the study's credibility (Finlay, 2002; Berger, 2015). Ethical standards were rigorously upheld throughout the research, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study (Creswell, 2013; Wa-Mbaleka, 2019).

3.3.2 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established by employing data triangulation, which involved semi-structured interviews with both TEs and PSTs and an analysis of written feedback, offering a comprehensive understanding of feedback practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Member checking further validated the findings, allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the themes and interpretations derived from their interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the research context and methodology, ensuring the findings' relevance to similar settings (Ahmed, 2024). Dependability was maintained through consistent data collection and analysis procedures, with member checking serving as a means to verify findings against the raw data (Varpio et al., 2017; Ahmed, 2024). Confirmability was achieved through rigorous reflexivity, where the researcher critically examined personal biases to ensure that the findings were grounded in the data rather than subjective interpretations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Olmos-Vega et al., 2022).

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Divergent Views on the Effectiveness of Written Feedback

The interview data revealed differences in beliefs between PSTs and TEs regarding the effectiveness of written feedback. Most PSTs believed their teachers' written feedback as highly beneficial for their writing development. For example, PST Akram emphasised this by stating, "accurate grammar means accurate writing." Similarly, student Razia uttered, "How can a person write in English without knowing grammar?" This sentiment was echoed by TE Zakia, who noted that students improved grammar with enhanced writing proficiency, believing that "once students improve their grammar … they can naturally improve their writing in English as grammar works like bricks." Teacher-Faraz also alluded: "Grammar is necessary for students and even students expect detailed feedback on punctuation, vocabulary, and grammar rules to facilitate their writing development."

In contrast, many TEs still argued that effective feedback should not solely focus on grammar issues. TE Khurram articulated this viewpoint, stating, "written comments on their assignments or tasks are never pre-planned. My feedback depends on the types of issues in their writings." TE Imran supported this perspective by emphasizing the importance of addressing organizational aspects or narrative structure rather than solely focusing on grammar, even when "students repeatedly request grammar-focused feedback" (TE Imran). TE Daad underscored the need for tailored feedback, asserting, "my feedback is not fixed for all, you cannot give the same pill to all patients. Some students need to focus on grammar and some do not."

4.2 Emotional Impact of Feedback

PSTs generally valued written feedback for its role in enhancing their academic writing tasks, yet they also emphasized the profound emotional impact of specific language used by TEs. For example, PST Ghulam expressed apprehension towards feedback that solely emphasized either positive or negative aspects. He stated:

> Some teachers highlight only issues; they never see something good in my writing. And some teachers only write 'good', they never point out problems in writing, so their feedback is good for nothing. Sometimes, I do not even read their comments because I feel bad after reading their views because I do not know how I can make my writing better.

PST Rehana highlighted the personal tool of feedback by stating "If my teachers [TEs] give me low marks like 30 out of 100, it's really not a problem. Learning is more important than just grades". Similarly, PST Razia noted:

> Grade is not an issue; issue is improvement in writing skill. How can I improve writing when they [TEs] write words like 'unsatisfactory', 'poor performance', or 'weak approach', I feel disturbed and sometimes I do not even sleep well.

Razia suggested that negative remarks discouraged rather than encouraged improvement. PST Zahida also linked feedback directly to her emotional state, expressing, "Words such as 'not impressive', 'useless', 'no progress', or similar words of teachers hurt me. I imagine the teacher saying this to me face-to-face, so these words are not silent. They hurt." She proposed using more constructive language to mitigate the emotional impact.

Majority of TEs provided different perspectives on the emotional effect of feedback. For instance, TE Daad believed that direct feedback, even if critical, helps students recognize areas needing improvement, illustrating, "Remarks such as 'not impressive' disturb some students while it energizes others." TEs such as Khurram and Shoukat acknowledged the emotional responses to feedback but emphasize the importance of constructive criticism. TE Shoukat noted, "I try to be careful in my written comments because students create something out of their mind; it could hurt them if it is criticized harshly."

4.3 Impact of Teacher Feedback on Writing Proficiency
The interview data illustrated that both TEs and PSTs attributed to written feedback in enhancing students' written drafts. PST Ghulam articulated, "Teacher written feedback for me is like the teacher being with me in his absence," highlighting the supportive role feedback plays in his writing process. PST Ayesha emphasized the importance of feedback in self-assessment. She stated:

> Feedback is the most important for me because it teaches me to find out what I did right, what I did wrong, at what place I am right, and I am wrong. Feedback improves me in future writing.

PST Zahida found written feedback to be a confidence booster, noting, "I always read written comments of the teachers when I am alone in the room and try to understand what good and

bad I have done. Written feedback is like a machine that raises my confidence." PSTs Akram and Razia viewed feedback as a measurement tool for improvement: "Teacher written feedback is a measurement tool for me because it tells me something new for my improvement."

TEs also shared that their feedback significantly contributed to PSTs growth in writing skills. For example, TE Zakia explained, "We know our level of satisfaction when we [TEs] compare our students'[PSTs] previous written work with the current improved or written work." TE Imran in this regard stated:

> If I give feedback to students on the use of present indefinite issue three times in indirect feedback, and the students repeatedly make similar mistakes, it means my students are not understanding my feedback. I then may move to direct feedback for their betterment.

4.4 PSTs' Frustrations with Ambiguous TE Feedback

The study identified significant concerns among PSTs regarding the clarity and utility of TEs' written feedback. PSTs expressed frustrations over unclear remarks. PST Rehana noted that vague feedback often left them unsure of what is required. She further explained that "Sometimes we get kind of written feedback which even after reading, we do not understand what the teacher wants from us." She highlighted the need for specific guidance, stating, "If a teacher writes that 'the text is not satisfactory,' I must know how I can make it satisfactory. The teacher must tell me the way, not just inform me through written comments." PST Babar criticized lengthy but unhelpful feedback. He stated, "Sometimes, they write huge lines, but these lines confuse me more. When we ask for clarity, they do not explain each comment they have written."

The purpose of extensive feedback dies when it does not help students. One of the female TE also reflected on the consequences of incomprehensible feedback, noting:

> ...when I get such vague feedback, I repeat the same mistakes because I do not know what I should do. And when I ask teachers again and again, still if they cannot explain, I then give up.

PST Ghulam shared his frustration, recounting:

> Once I submitted my assignment... and at the end of the paragraph, there was written only
> the word 'verb agreement'. So, I did not know what the teacher wanted to say by writing
> 'verb agreement'? Teachers' such comments do not really help.

Another example includes PST Rehana's experience with a teacher's comment lacking actionable direction:

> In an English literacy course, the teacher wrote, 'There is no clear concept in your writing,
> make it more conceptual.' I did not understand how to make it more conceptual or what I
> had to do; the teacher could not explain it and I could do nothing.

These instances illustrated that unclear feedback often leaves PSTs' feeling unsupported and demotivated. The lack of clarity can lead to repeated errors and emotional distress, as PSTs struggled to progress without clear guidance. TE Daad offered a contrasting view, suggesting that PSTs should take more initiative in understanding and addressing feedback, stating, "If they do not understand or comprehend the feedback, it means the teacher has led them to a new direction; they must search and find ways for remedy."

4.5 Barriers to Effective Written Feedback

The interviews revealed several challenges related to written feedback that TEs and PSTs faced. TEs commonly cited crowded classrooms, PSTs' limited language proficiency, and resistance to incorporating feedback as significant obstacles. Teacher Daad highlighted the time-consuming nature of providing feedback and expresses frustration when students ignore it: "It takes time to read the text and then identify their issues. It really tortures when students ignore the feedback, and they do not incorporate and do the same mistake again."

Similarly, TE Khurram mentioned the preference for direct meetings over written feedback due to students' incomprehensibility:

> Sometimes I avoid giving written feedback because I know they will come to me again to
> ask for the details, so I prefer direct meetings. Students' incomprehensibility is the reason
> for not giving them written feedback.

PSTs also reported issues with the quality of feedback they receive. PST Ghulam expressed dissatisfaction with TEs who seem disinterested in providing meaningful feedback, "…some

of their teachers are not interested in providing meaningful written feedback". He described receiving insufficient comments or unclear responses like "OK" or "perfect", which he finds misleading:

> Teachers just tick the work or write 'OK,' 'perfect.' So, this one word 'OK' is also confusing. I always want clear instructions or clear feedback in writing. I want direction not just 'OK'.

Ghulam further illustrated this issue with an example of feedback where a teacher commented, "excellent thought" and "good" but failed to provide specific guidance. Similarly, PST Akram discussed the challenge of overly precise feedback that lacks clarity:

> Sometimes I faced challenges about feedback which were not clear to me. Those were too much precise feedback. So, for clearing that feedback, I went to the teacher to ask what this word means or what that sentence means. I think feedback should not be that much precise; it should be expressive and clear to the student.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The study reveals that pre-service teachers PSTs seek detailed, grammar-focused feedback and are sensitive to its emotional tone, with negative comments affecting their motivation. TEs, on the other hand, provide more holistic feedback, addressing both grammatical and structural aspects, and tailor their comments to individual needs. They do this by assessing each PST's strengths and weaknesses to ensure comprehensive skill development. However, TEs often struggle with large class sizes, as the high student-to-teacher ratio makes it challenging to offer individualized attention and detailed feedback. This leads to time constraints and a reliance on direct and sometimes face-to-face, more generalized communication methods to manage their workload efficiently. Conversely, PSTs frequently encounter vague or unclear feedback, leading to confusion and frustration.

The current study underscores the crucial role of detailed, grammar-focused feedback in developing writing skills among PSTs. It is evident that PSTs prefer specific grammatical corrections, but procedural limitations impacting feedback effectiveness must be acknowledged. Findings from Asregid et al. (2023) and Adalberon (2020) about procedural constraints and rigid adherence to grade descriptors, although from international contexts, illuminate challenges relevant to the Pakistani setting. The lack of specific research in Pakistan

necessitates drawing from these broader perspectives to enrich understanding of feedback dynamics.

The study also highlights the significant emotional impact of written corrective feedback (WCF) on PSTs. Mahfoodh (2017) shows that feedback can elicit negative emotions, such as frustration and demotivation, especially when it is perceived as overly critical or vague. This aligns with our findings where PSTs reported frustration due to unclear or critical feedback. Voelkel et al. (2020) and Van der Kleij (2022) further emphasize that vague feedback exacerbates these negative emotions, a concern echoed in the findings of the current study.

It is important to integrate both cognitive and emotional dimensions into this discussion. Truscott (1996) and Truscott and Hsu (2008) stress the importance of delivering written feedback with empathy to mitigate negative emotional responses and foster a supportive learning environment. This perspective is vital given our findings that PSTs are affected by the emotional tone of feedback. To address this emotional perspective, Cheng et al. (2021) advocate for a balanced approach that combines targeted corrections with a supportive tone, aligning with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) to enhance engagement and learning outcomes. Additionally, PSTs' feedback literacy is crucial here. Sutton (2012) and Xu and Carless (2017) highlight that effective feedback involves cognitive, socio-affective, and epistemological dimensions, which are essential for addressing variations in student responses. This is necessary to improve written feedback practices based on PSTs' abilities to interpret and use feedback effectively.

Furthermore, Borg (2015b) underscores that teachers' beliefs and educational philosophies profoundly influence their feedback practices. Hyland and Hyland (2006) also observe that constraints such as time limitations and institutional policies affect the quality of feedback. Therefore, addressing these factors is crucial for improving feedback practices and ensuring that PSTs can apply feedback effectively in their professional development. This is pertinent to our findings where PSTs struggled with large class sizes and preferred direct communication, which can aggravate PSTs' frustration when feedback is unclear. In the literature related to Pakistani undergraduate programs, large classes and crowded classrooms have been serious issues in writing classes (Sharif & Zeeshan, 2023).

Despite its importance, feedback is often portrayed negatively in the literature, described as frustrating (Ferris, 1997), anxiety-inducing (Stern & Solomon, 2006), and tedious (Hyland, 1990). This negative portrayal is relevant to our findings, as PSTs reported frustration with feedback. When feedback is perceived as negative or unclear, it can demotivate PSTs and diminish their engagement. Dawson et al. (2018) and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory

(Vygotsky, 1978) underscore the need to address both cognitive and emotional dimensions to improve feedback engagement and outcomes, fostering a supportive learning environment that encourages constructive interactions and active engagement with feedback.

To enhance feedback effectiveness, it is crucial to balance positive reinforcement with constructive criticism; recognizing learners' strengths along with areas for improvement is essential for maintaining motivation (Wen, 2013; Guo & Zhou, 2021). Hyland (2013) advocates for feedback that considers purpose, audience, and text type, supporting overall skill development and comprehension. This approach leads to a more balanced and constructive feedback experience, enhancing PSTs' engagement and facilitating more effective learning. By recognizing both strengths and weaknesses, feedback becomes a tool for continuous improvement and deeper understanding, ultimately fostering a more positive and productive learning environment.

This study makes significant contributions to the field of written feedback practices in teacher education programs by providing a comprehensive exploration and examination of the dynamics between PSTs' beliefs for detailed written feedback and the challenges faced by TEs in delivering effective written feedback. It integrates insights from international research and focuses on the Pakistani context, offering valuable perspectives on written feedback practices. By highlighting the impact of both cognitive and emotional dimensions on feedback effectiveness, the study emphasizes the importance of empathetic feedback and aligns with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978). The research also underscores the importance of feedback literacy among PSTs, drawing on the work of Sutton (2012) and Xu and Carless (2017), and advocates for addressing constraints such as large class sizes and procedural limitations. Finally, it supports the need for professional development programs to refine feedback practices, which can help educators implement differentiated feedback strategies and promote a learner-centered approach.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This study examines feedback practices for PSTs in Pakistan teacher education institutes, emphasizing the need for detailed, grammar-focused feedback and addressing its emotional impact. The findings reveal that PSTs prefer specific grammatical corrections and are sensitive to the emotional tone of feedback, with vague or critical comments often causing frustration and demotivation. The study underscores the importance of providing clear and supportive feedback, integrating both cognitive and emotional aspects to enhance effectiveness. It highlights the need to address institutional constraints, such as large class sizes, and improve

feedback literacy among PSTs. The study's insights suggest actionable strategies for optimizing feedback practices, which have broader implications for educational practices and policies, contributing to a more supportive and effective feedback environment in teacher education.

Future research could explore several avenues based on this study's findings. Longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impact of detailed, grammar-focused feedback on PSTs' writing skills and professional growth. Comparative research might investigate how institutional constraints affect feedback practices across different educational contexts. Studies could also examine PSTs' coping strategies for negative feedback, evaluate the effectiveness of professional development programs in enhancing feedback practices, and assess the impact of feedback literacy training on PSTs' ability to use feedback effectively. Additionally, research could include observational studies of real classroom practices and analysis of written feedback samples to understand its application and effectiveness in authentic teaching environments.

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