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Public School Teachers' Perceptions of TFI Fellows:

A Qualitative Study Using Crafted Stories

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Abstract: The topic of this study stems from my past experiences as a Teach For India Fellow and my interactions with public school teachers. The narrative around the impact of TFI in India's education sector often omits the perceptions of public school teachers. This study, therefore, seeks to highlight the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers in India about Teach for India Fellows through the use of Crafted Stories to guide readers towards the voices of public school teachers.

The research adheres to a Hermeneutic constructivist approach, with the main consideration of this study being concerned with how researchers may be able to utilise Story Crafting under Hermeneutic Phenomenology to better illustrate the lived experiences of higher secondary public school teachers. The thesis is supported through a philosophical and theoretical framework that utilises the Hermeneutic Circle, Fusion of Horizons, Neoliberal Theory, Peircean Perception Theory and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. From the verbatim interview data of public school teachers, I present three crafted stories, each engaging with different themes and perceptions from the shared experiences of myself and the interview participants.

The findings of this study observe that the public school teachers' perceptions of TFI Fellows were negatively associated with the 'role' of a TFI Fellow. The observed perceptions are related to administrative overload, infrastructural and staffing issues, cultural ideas around discipline, and feelings of loss of control or exclusion. This study also contributes to a broader understanding of the methodological implications of Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Story Crafting. This study indicates that Story Crafting is a suitable for researchers who have intimate understanding context of their research and will engage readers on an emotional level which may not be possible through other qualitative approaches. By encouraging researchers in education to embrace this approach, future research may allow for readers to develop a deeper appreciation of the shared experiences of all stakeholders in this field.

Keywords: Teach for India, Public school teachers, Perceptions, Hermeneutic Phenomenology, Story Crafting

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List of Acronyms:

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Intermediary Organisations (IO)

Masters of Education (M.Ed.)

National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005)

National Education Policy (NEP, 2020)

National Teacher Educational Curriculum Framework (NCTE, 2009)

New National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's)

Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

Right to Education Act (RTE)

Secondary School Certificate (SSC)

Teach For All (TFAll)

Teach For America (TFA)

Teach For India (TFI)

United Nations (UN)

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1 Introduction

The education sector in India has been the centre of academic and political discourse over the last few decades. With policy reforms enacted by the Indian Government within the last decade, there has been a notable shift towards understanding and transforming the educational framework within the country. The divide between government funded schools (public schools) and private institutions of learning is still one of the predominant barriers between enabling equitable access to quality education to children across the country (Bagde et al., 2022, 8). Historically disadvantaged countries, such as India, are struggling to tackle the issues of inefficiency, lack of quality, and inaccessibility within their public school systems (Jagannathan, 2001, 8). In such contexts, the diversity and geographical challenges prevent the government from effectively delivering on their goals for education equity, a factor that Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) seek to address through their more adaptable approaches towards development (Ulleberg, 2009, 18). The development of the education sector in economically underprivileged states has become increasingly dependent on the intervention of NGO programs to assist in sharing said responsibilities (Ulleberg, 2009, 16). NGO's, such as Teach for India (TFI), are attempting to fill in these gaps by providing basic levels of teacher training and societal impact, particularly in urban areas.

The narrative around the impact of TFI in India's education sector has been focused on the key stakeholders, namely those of TFI itself, the local governing municipalities, TFI Fellows and most importantly, the students. However, in my time as a TFI Fellow as well as reviewing relevant literature, I observed that there is often an omission of another vital variable in the equation of TFI, specifically that of public school teachers. The focus of this research will be on these public school teachers, more specifically, on their perceptions regarding TFI Fellows. In this introductory section to the thesis, I will highlight my positionality to the topic, the general role of TFI, why I have selected a specific demographic of public school teachers, and finally the research question in consideration.

My time as a Fellow began in 2017, where I worked at a low-income public school in the city of Mumbai. I was assigned the subjects of Science I & II (Science I being Physics and Chemistry, and Science II being Biology and Life Sciences) due to a shortage of teachers in that particular department in the school I was working with. Other subjects my TFI co-fellows were allocated included English and History. Subjects which already had the adequate number

of public school teachers continued to be taught by them, largely independent from any input from the TFI Fellows. During the two-year Fellowship, I found myself frustrated at the apparent lack of progress my co-fellows and I were making with students we worked with, particularly due to how the public school teachers were either unable or unwilling to engage with our own teaching practices. From personal interactions with these teachers, it was apparent that they were disgruntled and unreceptive towards what TFI Fellows and TFI stood for. This disconnect between the public school teachers and us Fellows formed the core of my main takeaway from the Fellowship, wherein I constantly questioned how public school teachers could be encouraged to engage more with TFI practices as well as how they could be included in the narrative around education development by other key stakeholders. This feeling and question are the reason as to why I chose this topic for research.

Teach For India operates at multiple grade levels within the Indian public education system, ranging from grade 2 (students aged 6 – 7 years old) to grade 10 (students aged 15 – 16 years old). The nature by which TFI assumes control over the learning of the students varies depending on the grade in which the organisation is intervening. From grades 2 – 8, TFI Fellows operate in pairs and manage all subjects within the curriculum in those specific classrooms. Simply, a student in the aforementioned grades will have TFI Fellows available throughout the school day for every academic subject, with the Fellows functioning as stand-in classroom teachers for the entire set of students. This assignment of duties stems from a two-fold approach on the part of TFI, with the first goal being that TFI Fellows will have absolute control over all the learning styles and pedagogies in every subject. TFI strongly adheres to this structure, based on the overt importance they place on the long-term impact of early childhood education for students. This allocation of Fellows also allows public school teachers in the same grades to focus on other key aspects of managing the school, such as administrative tasks and long-term planning of curriculum. In contrast to this, grades 9 and 10 have a vastly different structure due to the more stringent academic demands placed upon students in this age group. For example, considering the context of public schools in the state of Maharashtra, students are enrolled in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) board of education which mandates that all students must appear for a state-wide ‘board’ exam at the end of grade 10. The importance of academic performance in these exams cannot be overstated, with the scores achieved in the board exam being the sole basis upon which students will gain admission into schools for grades 11 and 12 (these schools are colloquially referred to as ‘junior colleges’). TFI, acknowledging this fact, chooses to focus more on the academic performance of students at this age level, thus placing

Fellows into these classrooms in a streamlined, focused system. Fellows in grades 9 and 10 are therefore allocated specific subjects in the classrooms, as opposed to handling all subjects as Fellows do in prior grades. The allocation of subjects is dependent on the requirements of each specific school where TFI is intervening.

The nature of public school teacher and Fellow relationship in grade 9 and 10 lends to the reason I have chosen the demographic of this study. In earlier grades, the interaction between TFI Fellows and public school teachers is limited due to the nature of the allocation of subjects in those classes. However, in grades 9 and 10, there is much more frequent interactions between the two sets of educators due to the requirement of having to share the same class space and managing class timetables between each other. Therefore, in relation to the research question, it is evident that public school teachers who work in grades 9 – 10 are more likely to have developed an opinion and perception on the work and roles of TFI Fellows due to the close professional proximity they have with the Fellows on a day-to-day basis, thus making this group of public school teachers the ideal demographic for this study.

Considering these factors and my positionality, the research question of this study is influenced by the following key questions:

- Do higher secondary public school teachers feel estranged with how much control TFI Fellows are given over Grade 9-10 classrooms? How are TFI Fellows perceived?
- How do I understand these perceptions of public school teachers. What do they feel about TFI Fellows? Why?
- Is there a way to represent my own experiences as a Fellow along with the perceptions of public school teachers?

These questions have guided how I approached this study, informing the decision to utilise Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Crafted Stories as a method to represent my findings. Therefore, the research question of this thesis can be stated as: *How can researchers illustrate the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers about TFI Fellows through crafted stories?*

The initial sections of this thesis will articulate philosophical and theoretical frameworks that will be crucial to understand how I attempt to answer this research question. Following this, I will explain the background and functioning of TFI in detail along with what the organisation represents in a neoliberal context to the education sector of India.

2 Philosophical & Theoretical Framework

This qualitative study is centred on the methodological approaches of Hermeneutic Phenomenology. Further, the nature of the research question of this qualitative study “*How can researchers illustrate the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers about TFI Fellows through crafted stories?*”, indicates that this study is attempting to answer the question from a methodological perspective. In order to arrive at this answer, it is prudent to develop a deeper understanding of the philosophical background of Hermeneutic Phenomenology on a conceptual level. On the basis of this, I have adopted a framework that can be divided into two main categories, Philosophical and Theoretical. The Philosophical Framework will provide an overview of the underpinnings of Hermeneutic Phenomenology by explaining some of the philosophies that will be central to understanding why and how this research has been developed. More specifically, the initial subsections of this framework will delve into conceptual ideas such as the Hermeneutic Circle and the Fusion of Horizons.

The structure of this framework section has been influenced by Miles et al., (2013) statement that “Hermeneutic phenomenology is both a research method and a philosophy” (409). Indeed, Hermeneutic Phenomenology is fathered by the teachings of philosophers such as Heidegger and Gadamer; guiding the researcher towards developing a study from this philosophical perspective (Crowther et al., 2017, 826; Crowther & Thomson, 2020, 9). The philosophical nature of Hermeneutic Phenomenology is not conducive to applying rigid, predetermined theoretical frameworks while working with the data (Crowther & Thomson, 2020, 5). Simply, Hermeneutic Phenomenology requires the researcher to develop an appreciation for the philosophical foundations of Hermeneutics, an aspect that I seek to emphasise through the use of a Philosophical Framework in this section.

Despite Crowther & Thomson's, (2020, 5) reasoning behind the non-mandatory use of Theoretical Framework's in Hermeneutic Phenomenology, I have still decided to include theories to arrive at the answer of the research question. Beyond the methodological implications of the research question, this study also investigates the idea of ‘perception’ and the interpretation of these perceptions of public school teachers. Therefore, I have included a Theoretical Framework to present theories around ‘perception’, namely the Peircean Perception Theory and Bandura's Self Efficacy Theory, to further answer the research question. The Theoretical Framework will also include a section on the influence of the economic theory of Neoliberalism, an essential theory due to the importance of Neoliberalism in many of the

arguments raised in the Context. For this reason and for the general linearity in my text, I have decided to focus on the Philosophical and Theoretical Framework before guiding the reader into the Context.

2.1.1 The Hermeneutic Circle

The theory of interpretation, or Hermeneutics deals with an essential concept of the “Hermeneutic Circle”, which in essence states that the action of interpreting (be it actions in the world around us, a literary text or conversation) can never be truly independent of each person’s existing preconceptions about the world around them (Grondin, 2015, 1). The Hermeneutic Circle is one of Heidegger’s key philosophical contributions towards developing a deeper meaning of ‘understanding’ in the context of the lived human experience (Giles, 2008, 64). The reason this understanding of Hermeneutics is associated with the circle is based on how “the circle is that of the whole and its parts: we can only understand the parts of a text, or any body of meaning, out of a general idea of its whole, yet we can only gain this understanding of the whole by understanding its parts” (Grondin, 2015, 1). This theory stipulates that hermeneutic understanding occurs through the simultaneous interpretation of both the parts and the whole of the text or phenomenon (Dibley et al., 2020, 19). This is supplemented by idea that the interpreter must complement this process by constantly referencing their prior knowledge and then revisiting the object of interpretation (Dibley et al., 2020, 19). This constant journey between reading, understanding, and interpreting creates the shape of a ‘circle’ which can also be understood as the ‘unity’ of understanding and literature, forming the basis of the Hermeneutic Circle (Grondin, 2015, 4). Gadamer evolves the meaning of the Hermeneutic Circle by focusing in what prejudices do to the process of interpretation or understanding (Grondin, 2015, 14). When a researcher is conscious to the influence their prejudices have on their understanding or interpretations, the researcher opens themselves to deeper and more challenging interpretations of the meanings from text (Grondin, 2015, 14). In essence, while Heidegger preaches caution towards the role of prejudice in the Hermeneutic Circle, Gadamer encourages researchers to cautiously embrace their prejudices to truly hear what the literature is conveying (Grondin, 2015, 14).

From an academic context, the use of the Hermeneutic Circle is based on how the assumptions (or presuppositions) of the reader may influence the interpretation of literature (Martin, 1972, 97). Martin (1972) and Grondin (2015) both address how the Hermeneutic Circle is seen as an

unavoidable construct, as it is assumed to be impossible to engage in any analysis or reading of literature without allowing one's perceptions and biases to influence the interpretation process. In qualitative research dealing with perceptions or phenomena, the Hermeneutic Circle is widely utilised to organise the movement between data and understanding/interpreting (Dangal & Joshi, 2020, 28). In this qualitative study, the Hermeneutic Circle informs the interpretative process through which I engage with the interviews with the public school teachers. Laverly (2003, 30) argues that researchers undertaking Hermeneutic research should utilise the Hermeneutic Circle as a means of working with the data to understand their own historicity in relation to the language, phenomena and experiences shared by the interview participants. It is important to consider that utilising the Hermeneutic Circle is not a static activity, as with each new interpretation or understanding of the text, the perspective of the circle reorients itself (Debesay et al., 2008, 58). With respect to this study, this fluidity of the Hermeneutic Circle implies that the reflections of my own prejudices will be constantly reforming as I actively interpret and reinterpret the meanings of the interviews.

However, researchers should be cautious of the use of the Hermeneutic Circle in qualitative research, due to the risk of being unaware of prejudices or presuppositions that influence the interpretation of the literature (Debesay et al., 2008, 64). Engaging in this style of research without appropriate care and documentation of the researchers thoughts and prejudices can affect the trustworthiness of any Hermeneutic research (Whitehead, 2004, 513). Researchers must also be aware of there exists no idea of a 'final' interpretation, since with each reading of the text, a new interpretation arises (Debesay et al., 2008, 58–59; Kakkori, 2009, 25). In this regard, the perceptions I derive from the interview data are interpretations that I feel are most soundly placed to transparently communicate to the reader the meanings and feelings of the public school teachers (Debesay et al., 2008, 58–59).

2.2 Fusion of Horizons

The Fusion of Horizons is a Hermeneutic theory that is associated with the philosophy of Gadamer (Dibley et al., 2020, 25). In essence, this theory is concerned with what is commonly known as 'bias', explained through the concept of Horizons (Dibley et al., 2020, 26). A Horizon can be understood as the range of an individual's perception or understanding of the world around them, or simply, the point at which a person is unable to further create interpretations of the world on their own is known as their Horizon (Giles, 2008, 75). Laverly (2003, 25) further

explains that a 'Horizon' is the limit of a person's ability to see or understand a phenomenon, limits which prevent an individual from seeing beyond what is right in front of them, or in other words, limited by their inherent biases and prejudices. Development or broadening of a Horizon can only occur with a dialectic clash of pre-understandings or biases, leading towards the process of understanding through interpretation (Laverly, 2003, 30). This phenomenon is what we understand as the Fusion of Horizons. In the context of interpreting a text or interview, a Fusion of Horizons takes place when the interpreter's preconceived expectations come into contact with the meaning of the text (Giles, 2008, 74–75). By engaging with the meanings of the text from the lens of their own perceptions, the interpreter's Horizon expands to the point that it can become entirely different to the Horizon that existed prior to engaging with the text (Giles, 2008, 75). Subsequently, the meaning of the text also gains an expanded Horizon, connected to how the interpreter will develop their own understanding during the process of interacting with the text.

This reciprocity of understanding between the interpreter and texts, forms the basis of the Fusion of Horizons, highlighting how an individual's notion of truth is informed by the fusion of preconceived biases and fluid interpretations of a text (Dibley et al., 2020, 26). In the context of Hermeneutic Phenomenological research, this understanding should not be seen as simply re-stating the meanings of the interviews, rather it is the action of questioning what is within the interpreter and creating dialogue with the text or phenomenon (Laverly, 2003, 25). Similar to the Hermeneutic Circle, the Fusion of Horizons is a constant and fluid process, wherein each new experience or interpretation leads the researcher to a newer notion of the Horizon (Kakkori, 2009, 25). This indicates that any researcher engaging in Hermeneutic inquiry must be constantly reflexive and aware of their capacity to continually learn and expand their interpretations of the literature or phenomenon (Kakkori, 2009, 25). Most importantly, Whitehead (2004, 513) states that "Researchers cannot 'eliminate' their experience, which is inextricably linked to interpretation" (513), highlighting that the researcher must embrace their prior experiences to develop perceptions or themes from the interpretation of the text in a manner that the reader is able to understand that the interpretations are not just coming from the text itself.

However, researchers should be wary of the potential trap of the Fusion of Horizons. Researchers must be conscious of all of their historicity and preunderstandings when engaging with Horizons, as not appreciating the impact of their past on their interpretation can result in seeing their Horizon as all-encompassing and rigid (Vessey, 2009, 538). This implies that there

is no Horizon that can be objectively understood as the truth, that there is always a plurality of horizons that are dependent on history of the interpreter (Vessey, 2009, 541). Considering this, it is prudent that any researcher utilising this theory should avoid treating their interpretations as an action of arriving at any notion of truth.

In terms of this particular study, I utilise the Fusion of Horizons to continuously engage and broaden my own Horizon, culminating in understandings and perspectives that are represented through the crafted stories.

2.3 Peircean Theory of Perception

As stated in the research question, one aspect of this study will be focused on ‘perceptions’, a concept that is heavily tied to the Hermeneutic Circle from the lens of individual preconceptions or presuppositions. This study will be utilising Charles Peirce’s Theory of Perception. Peirce proposed his theory of perception in 1902, with a focus on the human psychological interpretation of what he refers to as ‘percepts’ and the causal relationship by which meanings are derived, which are called as ‘perceptual judgements’ (Almeder, 1970, 100). Essentially, this theory propagates that our perceptual judgements of the percepts around us (in both physical and metaphysical terms) are shaped by the lived experiences of each individual, implying that perceptual judgements are ontologically subjective (Almeder, 1970, 101). The use of the term “percept” is seemingly synonymic to the presuppositions referenced by Martin (1972) in relation to the Hermeneutic Circle theory, as both concepts form the basis through which an individual comes to perceiving or understanding a phenomenon. Barnham (2015, 9) takes the analysis of the theory a step further, articulating that this relationship of understanding what percepts *are* is dependent on subjective experiences of what the percepts *are not*. An example of this could be when a person sees an animal that they have never seen before in their lives. To arrive at the percept that it is a ‘new’ animal, they must first identify that this animal does not fit under any of their existing precepts, i.e., it is not an object that the person has perceived before. Interestingly, despite the focus on subjective perceptual judgments, Peircean Theory assumes that the perceptual judgements of each person are derived from a shared collective of experiences (Barnham, 2015, 8). Simply, perceptual judgements are only formed after the percept has been experienced, rather than percepts existing as their own unique entities.

From a qualitative standpoint, researchers regularly ask questions around ‘how’ in an attempt to study the perspectives and understandings of their research subjects (Barnham, 2015, 9).

Barnham (2015, 14) argues that Peircean Perception Theory is best positioned to build a holistic understanding of answering the ‘how’ in qualitative research, by virtue of the fact that this model is catered towards understanding ‘how’ people think, rather than ‘what’ they think. Applying these concepts to the research question of this study will present the opportunity to develop a holistic understanding of public school teachers’ perceptions on TFI Fellows.

2.4 Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1982, 147) defines his Self-Efficacy Theory as a system of understanding what factors influence a person’s perception on their ability to deal with future circumstances. An individual’s actions, choices and beliefs are said to be influenced by their personal perceptions of their social, behavioural and cognitive skills (Bandura, 1982, 147; Biglan, 1987, 2). Simply, a person will only be able to make meaningful contributions to their self-betterment (be it in a personal or professional self) if they are confident that they possess the requisite skills to achieve their goals in question. The Self-Efficacy Theory has been utilised in a variety of different research areas, but this specific study is concerned with its application in the context of education. Due to the theory’s focus on the influence of the surrounding environment on the beliefs of individuals or groups, educational contexts are considered to be suitable for analysis through the lens of self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 1995, 203). Self-efficacy is used in these contexts to research concepts of students’ academic behaviour, with researchers considering how self-efficacy affect factors of motivation, academic choices, and effort (Zimmerman, 1995, 204). From such research studies, it can be construed that Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory is ideal to develop a more nuanced understanding of the social constructs that influence factors of self-belief in the subjects of the study (Biglan, 1987, 11-12). By focusing on social constructs or the environment around the phenomenon, educational researchers may be able to use the Self-Efficacy Theory to better understand nuanced factors that influence the behaviour and beliefs of stakeholders in education.

In a study about teacher efficacy in Teach For America classrooms, Platt (2017) uses Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory to analyse the experiences of teachers and the role of a teacher’s self-belief system in the quality of classroom management. The study utilises deeper aspects of the Self-Efficacy Theory in terms of understanding how themes of performance outcomes, verbal persuasion and physiological feedback (among other themes) are deterministic in how a teacher’s self-efficacy affects classroom management and quality of academic delivery (Platt,

2017, 17). However, in the current study, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory can be applied in a more general sense with respect to the core demographic in the research question. The research question of this study raises concerns on whether the perceptions of public school teachers on TFI Fellows consequently affects their belief around self-efficacy in relation to their teaching ability. Further, by combining the Self-Efficacy Theory with the Peircean Perception Theory, this qualitative study can endeavour to answer these questions through the use of crafted stories.

2.5 Neoliberal Theory

Neoliberalism can be understood as an economic theory that has influenced the fabric of political, social and economic governance around the world since the end of the 20th century (Chopra, 2003, 422). Patomäki, (2009) attempts to define neoliberalism as “a programme of resolving problems of, and developing, human society by means of competitive markets” (432-433). The success of the Neoliberal theory in the modern world can be attributed to the emergence of national and globalised economic systems that place the competitive, free markets at the centre of all policy discussions (Chopra, 2003, 422; Patomäki, 2009, 433). This free market model under neoliberalism assumes that people and businesses are entirely motivated through values of individualism and rationality, thus informing how the current global market is structured around ensuring growth and competition on a public and private level (Chopra, 2003, 422–423).

Neoliberalism also demands that the free market remains uninhibited by national or international legislation, that these legislations allow for the private sector to have a dominant influence over the development of public services such as transportation and education (Kumar & Hill, 2012, 3–4). The development of these public sectors should not be misunderstood to be philanthropic in principle, with neoliberalism (and globalisation as a consequence) being focused on the growth of capital and profits, sometimes to the detriment of social development (Hill & Kumar, 2012, 19–20). Giroux (2012, 31–32) argues that public services under neoliberal democratic governments no longer become pillars that uphold democratic values such as equity, but instead become another sphere through which the free market is able to accumulate capital and power. Indeed, when considering countries like India, the education sector has rapidly developed since the turn of the 21st century in a manner largely dictated by the aforementioned priorities of neoliberal forces (Hill & Kumar, 2012, 21). Therefore, education sectors of neoliberal democracies are focused on delivering education as a ‘product’,

further highlighted by the increasing influence of the private sector in education contexts (Hill & Kumar, 2012, 21). Considering the growing influence of neoliberalism in the Indian education context, I feel that it is prudent to further explore this through both the Contextual Framework and the crafted stories.

3 Context

With the research question of this study being focused on the perceptions of the role of Teach for India and Fellows under the TFI Fellowship in the modern Indian educational context, it is prudent to understand the history of the organisation as well as how the organisation functions. TFI functions as one of the 28 members of the Teach for All (TFAll) network, which was created in 2007 to emulate and export the model of Teach For America (TFA) (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 87). For purposes of clarity, due to the nature of how all three organisations are interconnected, any reference to the models or practices of a specific organisation will be applicable to the others as well, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

The subsequent sections will articulate the concept of Public Private Partnerships in India, showing how the connection between the Indian Government and organisations such as TFI came into being. This will be followed with a discussion around the neoliberal nature of NGO intervention in India, an extension of the neoliberal theory presented in the Philosophical and Theoretical Framework.

3.1 Structure and Functionality of Teach for All/Teach For India

According to La Londe et al., (2015, 3) TFA and TFAll fall under the guise of entities referred to as Intermediary Organisations (IO), which can be understood to be a network of closely connected organisations working with common ideological foundations and goals. The core concept of the TFA model is to recruit young professionals, also referred to as ‘Fellows’ to operate as para-teachers in low income publicly funded urban schools. (Anderson, 2013, 685). The Fellowship structure of these Teach For models has two core functional mechanisms, the first being the recruitment and training of qualified young professionals and the second to inculcate these young professionals in teaching pedagogies (classroom management techniques, lesson planning) with the intention of assist certified teachers in economically and academically disadvantaged classrooms (Subramanian, 2018, 22).

3.1.1 Recruiting for TFA/TFAll/TFI

A defining component of the programme is the method by which the young professionals are incentivised to join with all the organisations (TFA, TFAll, TFI) acting as an alternative to regular teaching qualifications, significantly reducing the time required for aspirants to actually

enter into classrooms (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 88). The prestige associated with the TFAI programme can be attributed to the significant marketing and branding behind the network (Labaree, 2010, 48). By joining the Fellowship, Fellows are given the opportunity to do social good for two years while simultaneously boosting their CV's by displaying leadership skills and commitment to working for social betterment (Labaree, 2010, 49). The short-term commitment of the Fellowship gives Fellows the option to continue or stop teaching without spending more years in the field (Labaree, 2010, 49–50). Considering this relatively quick career development opportunity, it is easy to understand why TFAI Fellowships are able to regularly have students from highly selective universities commit to a two-year project. Another important aspect to consider is that many of the recruits to the programme are aware of how selective and prestigious it is to join such an organisation, with Fellowship alumni given the opportunity to establish important career connections and enter into a growing and powerful network of TFAI alumni). This point is further accentuated by the number of TFAI alum that have leadership and authority roles, both inside and outside of the field of education (Blumenreich & Rogers, 2016, 7).

Fellows and staff members of the Fellowships are also given relatively significant financial compensation for their time working with the organisation, ensuring that top graduates from college programmes or highly qualified professionals are further incentivised to join for a period of two or more years (Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013, 53). To accentuate this point, the salaries of TFI Fellows are Rs.20,000 per month (no teacher accreditation) compared to the salaries of public school teachers which is Rs. 28,000 to 30,000 per month (for teachers with 7+ years' experience). As a caveat, the TFI salary is referenced from the salary I received as a Fellow from 2019 and does not account for any inflation or changes in the salary since then. The salary of public school teachers is aggregated from online Indian job portals including data up to 2022, with portals also referencing the salary for teachers with 7+ years' experience as that is when it seems to stabilise. The salary numbers for both sets of educators are also for the state of Maharashtra since there are variations in the salary depending on the state in question. It should be noted that while the salary of the TFI Fellow is slightly lower than that of the public school teacher, the difference in experience requirements for the respective salaries indicates that the relative value of the salary is significantly higher in the case of TFI Fellows.

Between the potential upliftment in terms of career trajectory, the ability to enter into classrooms by circumventing traditional teaching certification requirements and the financial benefits, TFA and TFAI have ensured that their Fellowship model will continue to attract and

recruit the elite, academically talented, and driven Fellows into their ranks (Blumenreich & Rogers, 2016, 7). Consequently, this recruitment model and the two-year Fellowship structure of TFA helps achieve the main goals of the organisation, primarily being able to fill in for the lack of teachers in publicly funded schools (albeit for two years) and secondarily, create a robust network of alumni with a strong sphere of influence in education reforms and other related political fields (Kretchmar, 2014, 637; Crawford-Garrett & Thomas, 2018, 23). Anecdotally speaking, many TFI Fellows are able to utilise the value of having TFI on their resumes to gain admission into respected education degrees at universities like Harvard and Columbia, and then take up leadership positions at TFI or consulting firms that have strong connections to the development of the education sector in India.

3.1.2 Training the Fellows

The Fellows are required to undergo a training period of up to five weeks, during which they will be trained to teach and handle children of a variety of age groups and grades in the specific pedagogies of TFA (Kretchmar, 2014, 635; La Londe et al., 2015, 8). This training period is commonly known as the ‘training institute’ by Fellowship members in TFI. The TFI training institute is conducted by TFI staff, like managers and city directors, leading the training sessions for the new Fellows. Most of the trainers and senior management of TFI are internal hires from people who have completed their two years in the Fellowship. While the TFA training module required Fellows to be enrolled in a short-term accredited teacher training programme, the model utilised in TFI differs in this aspect, wherein no official accreditation is mandatory for TFI Fellows (Subramanian, 2018, 32). Based on the performance and preferences of the Fellow during the training module, they will then be matched to a school which best fits the needs of the students as well as the ability of each individual Fellow (Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013). Using my personal experience as a Fellow with TFI, my background at a higher secondary level in science as well as my performance at the training institute in the same subject are influenced the decision of TFI management to allocate me to a public school as a science teacher.

The teacher training curriculum for public school teachers in India is comparatively much more rigorous and in depth. Public school teachers in India are required to have a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) plus pre-service and in-service teacher training before being considered qualified to work in public schools (Azam & Kingdon, 2015, 77). According to the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), the duration of the B.Ed. has been increased from the

existing two years to four years (Aithal & Aithal, 2020, 7). Teachers who have completed their B.Ed have the option to pursue a one year Masters of Education (M.Ed.) as well as a three to five year PhD in Education, with 85% of teachers in India holding an M.Ed or higher (Azam & Kingdon, 2015, 77). The training and development of public school teachers is considered to be an continuous process, with teachers being required to attend professional development courses even after completing pre-service and in-service teacher training (Pandey, 2011, 4).

The prevalence of the Fellowship model of TFA/TFI has resulted in debates regarding the efficacy of traditional teacher training methods versus the expediated training module of TFI (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 88). Blumenreich & Gupta (2015, 88) claim that the TFI model does not challenge the existing system of teacher training and certification in India, stating that the Indian educational context is less developed than the American context with respect to the history of teacher certification. In contrast to their peers in TFA, TFI Fellows do not currently have access to fast tracked accreditation programmes that would allow them to extend their career as a teacher in publicly funded schools (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, p. 89; Vellanki, 2014, 139). While this may be true when the contexts are compared on the basis of longevity of existing certification requirements, India has certainly established specific principles and philosophies through the implementation of national frameworks, such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005), National Teacher Educational Curriculum Framework (NCTE, 2009) and the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) under the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) (Vellanki, 2014, 145).

One of the main critiques of the globalised model of TFA/TFI is that the core principles of the system, whether it be in America, India or any of the other 28 target countries, is the lack of contextual flexibility in the operating structure (Crawford-Garrett & Thomas, 2018, 20). Within the context of India, it would seem that such a generalised model would ill equip Fellows in TFI to be prepared to deal with the cultural, regional, and economical contexts of the schools they have been placed into. This would then raise questions of how the TFI pedagogy is expected to deliver on its promise of providing quality education as an alternative to traditionally certified teachers (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 95; Crawford-Garrett & Thomas, 2018, 22). Therefore, this concern about the contextual nature of TFA/TFI Fellowship models raises questions around the efficacy and value of the systems overall.

3.2 Public Private Partnerships in India

The role Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) play in the development of India's Education Sector is quite significant. The emergence of NGO's and their grip over developmental practices in the Education Sector is tied to the economic history of India in the late 20th century. As documented by Srivastava (2010, 542), the New Economic Policy of India in 1991 heralded a new age of market liberalisation and allowed the economically beleaguered nationalised enterprises to depend on the support of the growing influx of privatised corporations. The term of "Public Private Partnership's" (PPP) is introduced in this same article, to reference and articulate the strategy of the Government of India to rely on private entities to aid in the development of key social sectors of the country, especially that of Education (Srivastava, 2010, 541). The original intentions of PPP's, at the time of their introduction in the 1991 economic reforms, was to allow for the private sector to support the Government in its development mandate by filling in the areas that the Government was unable to cater to in that moment. Srivastava (2010, 542) highlights, through a thorough analysis of how the structure and language surrounding PPP's, that this partnership between private organisations (including NGO's) and the Government has been pushed in a neoliberal direction. Indeed, the neoliberal nature of the modern Indian developmental sector (particularly in education) can be seen by the number of NGO's that have been established in the country over the last two decades, a factor that Goswami & Tandon (2013, 656) attributes to the influence of how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has made it more enticing for private organisations to venture into social development. The importance and influence of neoliberalism in the educational context of India can be explored more in depth in the section following this.

Reforms in the education sector, such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, also referred to as the Right to Education Act (RTE), was passed by the Indian Government in 2009, eventually setting the stage for the TFAAll network to establish a foothold into the country (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 87). To support this point, it should be noted that over 1,100 schools have been operationally controlled by private entities or NGO's through PPP's in the region of Mumbai, India in 2013 itself, with the number only increasing since then (Vellanki, 2014, 141).

The role of PPP's and the neoliberal driving force behind NGO's is notably more apparent when observing the development of the Education sector over the course of the last 20 years. With respect to how PPP's were structured in the education sector, the term of "contracting models"

is commonly used which is, in essence, a model wherein the Government (or Government agency) contractually enters into an agreement with a private organisation in an effort to lease out the responsibility of developing and operating the educational infrastructure in a particular region (Srivastava, 2010, 543). Several non-profit organisations that function in the education sector possess a symbiotic relationship with national or local Education Departments through these contracting models in PPP's, one of the prime examples being the centre of this study; Teach for India (Dasra, 2010, 50).

It is argued that the role of NGO's and similar organisations have lost sight of their purpose in aiding the Government's development mandate, with NGO's now being complicit in the neoliberal global economy, their operations are less focused on covering areas that the Government has overlooked or contracted out but rather to ensure that more individuals are able to participate in the global economic chain (Goswami & Tandon, 2013, 657). Indeed, it is observed that private organisations are now more motivated in investing into the PPP's systems for education as they see a possibility to directly develop a new class of workers with the requisite skillsets to succeed in their own corporations (Subramanian, 2018, 28).

3.3 Neoliberalism of NGO Intervention

The global scale and impact of TFA and its IO with TFAll (culminating in the national presence of TFI in India) can be attributed to both international and national changes that have influenced the trajectory of private sector involvement in the education sector. One of the theoretical foundations of this research is the economic theory of neoliberalism, a theory wherein a capitalist system functions around the values of the free market with the needs of the private players being prioritised over that of the public (Chopra, 2003, 423). The role of NGO's and the manner by which they have influenced national policy around social development across the world can largely be associated with the growth of neoliberal globalisation paradigms established by organisations like the United Nations (UN) (Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 90). The IO of TFA and TFAll serves as one of the leading global examples of the export of neoliberal ideologies of educational reform, with much of the discourse around 'fixing' education inequality being centred around 'commonality' of the education problem, rather than focusing on specific contexts surrounding national education inequalities (La Londe et al., 2015, 13; Blumenreich & Gupta, 2015, 90; Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013, 53). Indeed, the practice of TFA and other associated organisations has been labelled as "neoliberal social

entrepreneurship”, indicated by the emphasis on modern ‘Western’ pedagogies when promoting the programmes’ allure to nations struggling with educational inequality (Ellis et al., 2016, 60; Subramanian, 2018, 25). Kavanagh & Dunn, (2013, 54) highlight the ideology of TFA being highly based in neoliberalism, with the organisation placing overt emphasis on test scores as the key student performance metric. The emphasis of test score and data driven approaches to student performances is a hallmark of neoliberal practices of treating individuals as commodities towards the production of social capital (Bhutani Vij, 2021, 5).

It is also observed that from an ideological perspective, TFA and TFAll discount the impact of socioeconomic factors of race, language and ethnicity when dealing with educational inequity, taking a neoliberal approach to philanthropism that is centred around a ‘one size fits all’ approach to the problems (La Londe et al., 2015, 14). With how the model of TFI has garnered acclaim in India for its approach to addressing inequity in education, the influence the organisation has had in terms of transforming beliefs around educational values has raised concerns around whether these transformations are sustainable in the long term or a push towards privatised and neoliberal values being further incorporated in the Indian education sector (Olanrewaju et al., 2021, 712).

Kumar (2008, 13–14) illuminates the neoliberal influence in Indian education, highlighting how a robust public education sector was never established in the country, with the government allowing for private markets to take over this mandate. Indeed, this phenomenon can be observed through the stark contrast in funding and number of private schools in India in comparison to public schools (Kumar, 2008, 14–15). Hill & Kumar (2012, 17) argue that this state of affairs between private and public schools only serves to push the neoliberal agenda by creating an illusion of choice, with the increasing privatisation of education (and therefore price of education) forcing the economically disadvantaged communities of India into attending under-funded public schools. Kumar (2008, 19) also argues that the private education sector has influenced the mentality of Indian society, with private schools being seen as opportunities of upwards social mobility as well as social status symbols. Considering these factors, it is apparent that organisations such as TFI have managed to find an opportunity in the Indian market to act as a bridge between the supposed social advantages of private schooling and the poorly funded public schools.

The neoliberal nature of how TFAll (and subsequently, other Teach For programmes) approaches dynamic and complex issues surrounding education inequity can be summarised in

the following way “Teach for All presents itself as an idealistic and exceptional external force taking action on a broken state, failed relationships and the redundant knowledge of professionals. This idealistic force is a form of social entrepreneurship that values leaders ... above teachers” (Ellis et al., 2016, 75). This argument raised by Ellis et al. (2016, p. 75) touches upon the issues concerning the growing influence of neoliberal forces in the field of education in India, by indicating the role of international, private forces in further exploiting the status quo of Indian education.

4 Methodology & Methods

For the purposes of conducting this qualitative study, I have decided to utilise the methodology of Hermeneutic Phenomenology. The overarching methodology of Phenomenology is highly suitable for this specific qualitative research due to the emphasis on understanding perceptions of public school teachers, which can be reinterpreted to indicate that this study is about understanding a phenomenon. Phenomenology is a methodology of research that strives to understand phenomena or patterns around us, from the lens of humans being conscious, reflexive and critical thinkers (Dibley et al., 2020, 6). Dibley et al., (2020) describe the action of conducting phenomenological research as being concerned with “a deeper understanding of the lived experience can change a person's reality and what it means to be a human being. A closer look at a phenomenon of concern expands awareness of what is and broadens human perspective. Further, a phenomenological view acknowledges that multiple realities exist, and that groups or communities share in these realities” (7). In other words, phenomenological research engages with the plurality of the shared human experience and the influence of phenomena on the understanding of those experiences. Further, the use of phenomenological methodologies entails the search for meaning of phenomena from the lens of the lived experiences of people living in and around the specific phenomena (Dibley et al., 2020, 19). For this research, utilising a phenomenological approach will allow for a deeper and more holistic understanding of the lived experiences of public school teachers who have worked with TFI.

4.1 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a methodology has largely been fathered by the works of Heidegger and Gadamer, defining Hermeneutics as a methodology that stands out as its own unique take on interpretative phenomenology (Dibley et al., 2020, 17). The goal of any phenomenological study, especially one rooted in hermeneutics, is that of interpretation and developing meaning (Dibley et al., 2020, 27). Most interpretative phenomenological methodologies are focused on the subjects of the study and their interactions with the studied phenomena, which is contrasted by Hermeneutics which is focused on how the researcher themselves exists in relation to the phenomena, i.e. the experiences of the researcher is considered to be a core aspect of interpreting and understanding the phenomena (Dibley et al., 2020, 19). A hermeneutic phenomenology can be understood as a study on the experience of

human beings and phenomena, in terms of how each individual or a group of individuals may perceive or understand the phenomena they observe around them (Dangal & Joshi, 2020, 26). Rashotte & Jensen, (2007, 100) use the concept of stories to highlight the hermeneutic phenomenological process, indicating how stories require context and meaning to be truly understood yet these meanings can only be understood from an individual's lived, subjective experiences.

Having already established the suitability of interpretative phenomenology for this study, my positionality with relation to the research question makes the use of hermeneutic phenomenology more relevant as the choice of methodology. In fact, I argue that this qualitative research would benefit from my personal lived experiences as a TFI Fellow when understanding the perspectives of public school teachers, something which will be evident in the manner through which data was collected and analysed.

4.1.1 Interpretivist Paradigm & Hermeneutic Constructivism

This section of the Methodology will strive to articulate the ontological and epistemological perspectives for this study. Ontological and epistemological perspectives form the basis of how any research intends to approach making sense of the world and phenomena around us (Dibley et al., 2020, 44).

Specifically, Ontology is concerned with the nature of an individual (Being) and their relation to the world or objects around them. A definition which can be understood from Heidegger's perspective as "Our being-in-the-world is an experiential, situated and unique perception informed by the personal understanding and experience of the perceiver and their 'beingness'" (Dibley et al., 2020, 44). Epistemology, on the other hand, raised questions around the existence and truthfulness of knowledge, such as whether the knowledge we experience in the world exists as objective truth or knowledge being a construct of each individual's experiences in life (ibid, 44). Different paradigms exist on the basis of the researcher's position to the ideas of ontology and epistemology and these perspectives help to form the methodological framework for any study, be it qualitative or quantitative. As a researcher, it is important to be able to establish this framework to convey the lens from which I will be approaching the philosophical and theoretical considerations of this research.

The qualitative nature of this research caters to an interpretivist paradigm due to the focus on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to perceptions of public school teachers. An interpretivist approach to qualitative research is based on the need to understand human phenomena within societal and cultural contexts (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020, 41). Utilising a paradigm of this style will enable this research to avoid the dehumanising nature of data based analysis in a positivist paradigm thus allowing for a contextual and holistic understanding of phenomena in relation to teachers who have worked alongside TFI (Thanh & Thanh, 2015, 26).

Considering the focus of the research question, on the subjective perceptions of public school teachers on TFI Fellows, the research paradigm is best suited for a Constructivist approach. Specifically, having used theories such as the Hermeneutic Circle and Peircean Perception Theory, it would be prudent to note that this study will be adopting Hermeneutic Constructivism. According to Peck and Mummery (2018), Hermeneutic Constructivism can be understood as a framework by which researchers may seek out “a nuanced and more idiographic understanding and representation of human being for qualitative research” (4). This ontology is purported to solve the underlying tension that is present when researchers engage with hermeneutic phenomenology, wherein the need to codify language from data collection clashes with the more expressivist account of what language means on a more ontological scale (Peck & Mummery, 2018, 2). Hermeneutic Constructivism allows researchers to address this tension by virtue of how the framework does not discriminate between what a person may say in language and what is understood by that person and the interpreter (Peck & Mummery, 2018, 4). With a philosophical approach that is in line with the Peircean Perception Theory and Hermeneutic Circle, utilising Hermeneutic Constructivism will allow this study scope to give a more humanistic understanding of how and why public school teachers perceive TFI Fellows in their classrooms, a factor that I seek to emphasise through the analytical method for this methodology.

4.2 Designing the Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research

According to Dibley et al., (2020, 56–57) research grounded in Hermeneutic Phenomenological methodologies are entirely concerned with developing insight into the lived human experience. The most suitable method of beginning the exploration into these experiences is by creating dialogue with the demographic in question, indicating that researchers must conduct interviews with their participants to collect verbatim data (Crowther & Thomson, 2020, 2; Dangal & Joshi,

2020, 32). Therefore, this section will elaborate on the steps I undertook to design and conduct interviews, following which I will explain the importance of using Story Crafting as the analytical method of this study.

4.2.1 Interview Design

At the outset, it should be noted that when this research was planned, I had intended to utilise the methodology of Phenomenography. Therefore, these interviews were originally designed with the intention of utilising Thematic Analysis, not Story Crafting. However, since the interviews still focused on bringing out the perspectives of public school teachers, I felt that it was possible to use the same interviews but then analyse them from a Hermeneutic Phenomenological approach. The remainder of this section will highlight how these interviews were structured towards creating data that would help me to analyse the perceptions of the concerned demographic.

For this research, I have elected to utilise semi-structured interviews, which involves organising and structuring the interview themes or topics in a certain order, although the sequence and wording of the questions can be changed depending on the interviewee's responses (Roulston & Choi, 2018, 233). Roulston & Choi, (2018, 233) also explain how semi-structured interviews are not limited by rigidly adhering to the originally planned interview structure, with follow up questions or comments allowing the researcher to push the interview in directions that may not have been anticipated during the design of the interview. Semi-structured interviews are apt for a study centred around both the interviewee and the researcher reflecting and sharing their own perceptions of shared phenomena (Roulston & Choi, 2018, 235).

Formulating questions for the interview in a semi-structured method was one of the main challenges considering how I was exploring deeper perceptions of public school teachers, rather than their base experiences. In my prior experience interacting with this demographic of teachers, I have observed that while they are willing to share their experiences and thoughts on general education related topics, it is a more challenging endeavour to delve into perception-based discussions around TFI and other policy related matters. With regards to this, it was prudent to design questions to allow for the interviewees to feel comfortable sharing their more personal beliefs around TFI, something I accomplished through the use of more open ended and leading questions. Another aspect which aided in developing a safe and open space for the interviewees was my own knowledge about their profession and my personal experiences

working in the same environment, creating a sense of empathy and relation between me (the researcher) and the interviewees. Roulston & Choi, (2018, 238) indicate that preparing, researching, and reflecting on the backgrounds of the selected demographic of interviewees allows for the researcher to create engagement that caters to a more relevant database for the research question. The open-ended nature of the questions also allows for the questions themselves to be altered to suit the interview candidate as well as adapt to the evolution of the conversation through the course of the interview.

The sample size of interview data is informed through whether a research is qualitative or quantitative in nature, with qualitative studies generally utilising sample sizes that are reflective of the phenomena in question (Dibley et al., 2020, 55–56). As stated earlier, since the intention of this study was to utilise Phenomenography and Thematic Analysis, I was aiming to collect upwards of ten (10) interviews to encapsulate the perceptions of public school teachers. Unfortunately, many potential interview candidates expressed hesitancy towards speaking openly about their perceptions on TFI Fellows, as they felt their thoughts could be construed as critical towards the governments' decision to allow TFI to work in public schools. After their consequent withdrawal from this study, I was left with only four (4) completed interviews from candidates who agreed to be interviewed. Indeed, this inability to procure more interview data was the primary reason behind my reason to shift the methodological approach from Phenomenography to Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

The final version of the interview questions is attached to the Appendix of this study.

4.2.2 Conducting the Interviews

This section will briefly highlight the process of how the interviews were conducted, both from a structural and technical standpoint. After identifying and reaching out to public school teachers who fit within the parameters of the demographic for this study, I prepared to conduct the interviews in person. Three (3) out of the four (4) interview candidates were situated in the same physical location as me and therefore it was possible to conduct these interviews in person. Prior to meeting the interview candidates, I prepared important documentation to suit the academic professional and ethical guidelines under which this study was conducted. This involved drafting and creating copies of Informed Consent Forms and Privacy Notices for the candidates. The interview candidates were presented with a copy of each document and the contents of which were thoroughly explained to them to ensure that each interviewee was aware

of the steps through which their personal and interview data would be protected. Besides the academic and ethical requirements for these steps to be carried out, explanation of privacy and anonymity in the study also allows the interview candidates to feel more at ease with sharing more personal thoughts during the interview. The three (3) interviews conducted in person were recorded with the help of audio recording software on my personal laptop and mobile phone. The interviews were recorded on multiple devices to account for the possibility of data corruption or deletion. Each interview was labelled in a manner to prevent the files from being linked to the personal data of the candidate, utilising a naming scheme from the Greek Alphabet, e.g *Alpha*, *Beta* etc. The fourth (4th) interview was conducted over telephonic call due to the candidate being located in a different region. In this case, the candidate was sent digital copies of the Informed Consent Form and Privacy Notice but was unable to give written consent to be part of this study due to technical limitations on their part. Consent for this interview was established verbally at the beginning of the interview, a practice that was also used in the prior interviews. This interview was documented through digital software that allowed for recording of telephone calls.

The interviews were conducted in languages which the interviewee's were most comfortable speaking in. As a result, the languages in the interviews were a mixture of English, Hindi, and Marathi, although the Indian languages were the predominant languages that were used. Due to my prior work as a TFI Fellow in Mumbai, Maharashtra, three (3) interviews were conducted with public school teachers working in the same city. The telephonic interview was conducted with a public school teacher who worked in the nearby city of Pune. For privacy and confidentiality reasons, I will not be disclosing more details about their work experience, age or gender as these details, along with their relationship with TFI could be used to identify these teachers.

4.3 Method of Analysis: Story Crafting

As established at the beginning of the Methodology section, this study will utilise the analytical method of Story Crafting. Story Crafting, defined by Crowther et al. (2017) as “a provocative and powerful means of evoking shared pathic responses ... They can communicate the way we humans make sense of events and relationships, both with ourselves and with others” (827). Data collected for qualitative research in Hermeneutic Phenomenology is only representative of the surface level meanings of words and language used in the interviews, however by

utilising stories, researchers are able to highlight shared human experiences and phenomena with people who may not be able to be involved in the phenomena itself (Crowther et al., 2017, 829). Looking at this approach from a traditional lens of phenomenological paradigms, the notion of altering data collected from interviews (in this case transcripts) would be considered as improper in terms of academic ethical guidelines (Crowther et al., 2017, 828). However, it is important to state that different research paradigms treat data in different manners, and thus hermeneutic phenomenology is more interested in “not working *on* the data but working *with* data” (Crowther et al., 2017, 829). It should be noted that this methodology is not overly concerned with arriving at or revealing any objective truth, rather it is attempting to highlight that there is no singular truth in terms of human perceptions, with the crafted stories showing to the reader that different phenomena, feelings and experiences can be varied and subjective (Crowther et al., 2017, 828). Further, analysing data through this method requires the researcher to embrace the process of bringing to light the hidden meanings behind the shared experiences of the interview participants, not to focus on drawing out notions of truth (Smythe & Spence, 2020, 8). Giles (2008, 65) understands Story Crafting as, in essence, a practice of writing for the researcher. The interview data is comprised of shared phenomena and experiences of the interview participants, extracts of which can be turned into crafted stories (Crowther et al., 2017, 827). Story Crafting, as a phenomenological writing tool, distinguishes itself from other types of academic writing by virtue of how the researcher is writing to understand the phenomena as opposed to writing to explain their understanding (Giles, 2008, 65). In other words, this method of analysis seeks to highlight the understanding of the researcher through the action of writing the crafted stories. Researchers must be aware of what the verbatim contains, to be conscious of what is and is not a story in relation to the research phenomena (Smythe & Spence, 2020, 2).

The action of crafting stories requires the researcher to interpret the data by asking themselves questions related to the phenomena being studied (Giles, 2008, 91). In the context of this study, I had to ask myself questions such as “What is the teacher trying to articulate here?” and “Can this perception be constructed into a story?” By engaging with these answers during the interpretative process, I arrive at some understandings of the public schools teachers’ answers and my own preconceptions about the phenomena they are talking about. This understanding, further informed by the application of theoretical concepts like the Fusion of Horizons, helps develop the foundation that the crafted stories are built upon (Dangal & Joshi, 2020, 36). The

specific steps through which the verbatim data was transformed into the crafted stories will be explained in depth in the Analysis chapter of this study.

The use of Story Crafting from the lens of Hermeneutic philosophy will, firstly, allow me to explore the intersectionality of my own experiences at TFI with the experiences of public school teachers as well as give readers of this study a chance to enter into the story to experience the phenomena in question themselves.

5 Analysis

Utilising Story Crafting as a tool of analysis for Hermeneutic Phenomenology in this particular study proved to be a challenging yet fulfilling endeavour. Having previously established how the relevant data for this study was procured, this section will explain the steps by which I was able to arrive at the Crafted Stories of this study, with a detailed analysis of the transcribing process, interpretation of the verbatim data and construction of relevant story lines to address the research question.

5.1 Transcribing

For the purposes of this study, I was able to procure four (4) interviews with public school teachers who fit well within the demographics of this research. The transcribing process for these interviews was made more complicated by the fact that each interview was conducted in a mixture of languages, namely Hindi, English and Marathi. These languages were utilised in order to allow for ease and comfort of communication for the public school teachers. However, the consequent audio files were not easily processed through transcription software's, resulting in the files needing to be manually transcribed.

Referencing back to the philosophical foundations of the methodology of this study, Hermeneutic Phenomenology is interested in developing meanings found in interviews beyond that of verbatim interpretation of words (Dibley et al., 2020, 27). These meanings are therefore developed from the lens of the researcher and allow for the researcher's personal experiences to flow into the interpretative process (ibid, 27). In the context of the transcribing process, it is relevant to emphasise that by translating the words from Hindi/Marathi into English, I as the researcher, am actively reimagining and interpreting the specific words from one language into a sensible linguistic structure in English. Indeed, Doering et al., (2022) describe the necessity of the translation process as "a significant act to reach the meaning of the phenomenon as the authors tried to understand the meanings of the lived experience to keep the essence of the original texts between different languages" (2). This understanding of interpretation in a Hermeneutic lens is further exemplified by the nature of manual transcribing, wherein each word or phrase in the languages of Hindi or Marathi were translated into English through my own personal understanding and history with the languages. While certain idioms or phrases may only make sense in the original language of the interview, my experience and history with those phrases would inform how the term could be phrased to make sense in English. For

example, in the interview with *Beta*, the interviewee used an idiom in Hindi which could literally be translated to “*A horse is there and sleeps, not the way it is above horse's ears and above his eyes, right?*” which does not translate into a clear, digestible meaning when written in English. However, by utilising my own contextual understanding of the phrase in Hindi, I could then transcribe the same phrase to represent my interpretation, stated as “*A horse can only see what is in front of its eyes, when you put a blinder on it*”. Therefore, had the transcribing process relied purely on literal translations of Hindi and Marathi, it would not be possible to derive meanings from the verbatim text to eventually craft into stories. This example represents the steps that inherently follow the Hermeneutic approach to interpretation, indicating that the analytical process of the interview data in this study began at the transcription stage.

5.2 Interpretation of Verbatim Data & Story Crafting

Crowther et al., (2017, 829) emphasizes that when turning verbatim data into crafted stories, the data must be worked *with* rather than worked *upon*. Converting and interpreting the verbatim data from interview transcripts into a crafted story as a form of analysis can be broken down into a smaller steps (Crowther et al., 2017, 829):

- i. Identifying a story/phenomena/plot that the researcher feels is best suited to be utilised in a crafted story.
- ii. Keeping or elaborating on sentences that the researcher identifies as central to conveying story themes or ideas.
- iii. Consequently, the removal or stripping of details that do not add to the core phenomena or story.

In the case of my research, in order to identify phenomena and themes from the interview transcripts, it was necessary for me to alter Crowther’s analytical methods. Due to the fact my interview questions were originally catered towards phenomenography, the data analysis required a slightly different approach. The interview transcripts do not have a singular story or phenomenon to craft into a story as per Crowther’s methods. As consequence of this, I identified common themes and lines of thought among the various participants, and then organising them together to identify a phenomenon that could be used in a story.

The sections shown below are an example of how I approached the interview data to categorise the phenomenon of “discipline” for the crafted stories.

Beta:

“... whatever NGO people come here, I doubt they will be able to take care of our children, that they will be able to control them. The thought that was my doubt became clear that all these people had trouble controlling the class and because they were too polite...”

“... but somewhere, the concept that was there, their didi and bhaiya, I did not like it. ... I felt that way. Because of this we had issues of indiscipline”

Gamma:

“They didn’t know the exact way to behave in the school or with the children. Discipline was a big issue. When the TFI teachers were in the class the kids would get noisy and rowdy. They had more free reign in the class when TFI teachers were there. The main problem was the way the kids would talk to the TFI teachers would then be how they started talking to us other teachers...”

Delta:

“What did they pick up from the TFI teachers? Style. This is not the way you have to speak. When they're speaking to me, they'll say “hi, teacher”, I said “hi?” Today when I go to my (old) school I won't even look my principal/teacher in the eye. And I don't say that you have to get frightened, but it is a respect which is shown in the Indian society. To your guru. Or to the senior teacher of your school.”

“... Ma'am these kids do not wish us properly, if we say anything to them they go and tell the bhaiya or didi. How much confidence did you give to the students then, it's becoming arrogance.”

These responses from the interviewees do not present themselves in any cohesive flow that can be understood as a story. However, I identified a common theme to the phenomenon all the participants were referencing to and therefore categorised responses of this nature into the theme of “discipline”. Due to the prevalence of this perception on the part of the interviewees, I structured their ideas around “discipline” to be a central thematic concept within the crafted stories.

At another point in the analytical process, I identified a particular story from Delta's interview transcript that I felt could be utilised as the main setting and plot point for one of the crafted stories.

Delta:

“there was a teachers day and when there was a teachers day, I told the teachers that there will be no special class program ... it is universal ... The school has the same program for all the teachers... We are going to have a common teachers program which will be done by 10th standard for all the teachers from class Pre primary to 10th standard, but somehow that particular XYZ they came to me in the morning said we want to get a cake. I said no, you will not get the permission to get a cake...”

I decided that the idea of a cake-based controversy on teacher's day could be an excellent setting for one of the crafted stories. While the setting was not inherently relevant to the perceptions of Delta, it presented itself as an ideal setting through which other phenomena could be weaved into the crafted story.

Continuing within Hermeneutic approach, the step after identifying the story themes or phenomena is the point where my personal perceptions actively influenced the analytical process. Crowther et al., (2017, 832) consider this blend of the researcher's preconceived understandings and perceptions of phenomena with those of the research participant's to be the integral step to move towards creating a crafted story. Therefore, it was prudent that I utilised my own perspectives and experiences from my time working as TFI Fellow with the same demographic of public school teachers to influence how the various themes and phenomena can be incorporated into the stories.

When considering the following quote by Alpha, I am interpreting their perspectives through my own prior observations of how public school teachers operated in the same context.

Alpha:

“... So that one thing to me was not appropriate because we believe in equality, so I believe equal rights to each and every kid when I am available to my kid, even of that grade, similar things, at least the opportunities that they are giving, that should be made available to my kids as well...”

In this context, Alpha is commenting on the idea that TFI Fellows were not entirely equitable in how they treated the students in the classroom. The quote is directly referencing their own personal belief that they act in a fair and equal manner with all the students they teach in school. However, I can only utilise this in the story once I interpret it from my personal frame of context, where I have observed teachers in this demographic treating students in a different manner depending on factors related to academic success and orderly behaviour. I have observed instances where this bias influenced how the teachers would select students for extra-curricular activities, a fact that directly contradicts what Alpha is stating in the quote. These contrasting perceptions regarding a teacher's belief on treating students in an equitable manner presented to me the idea of representing conflicting perceptions of TFI Fellows and public school teachers in the crafted stories. With respect to the reliability of entering my thoughts into the study, this step is not a situation of me questioning the truth of the public school teacher or that I am stating that my own experiences are more truthful towards crafting the stories. Following the theories of the Hermeneutic Circle and the Fusion of Horizons, my interpretations of the verbatim text are not concerned with validating or invalidating notions of truth in the study. Rather, it is about the dialogue that I create within myself with these presuppositions and the text that bring in the philosophy of Hermeneutic writing into the crafted stories. This is not to say that the experience shared by Alpha is right or wrong, it is about highlighting to the reader that the same perception can exist in sometimes conflicting ways and that by bringing this to light, I am engaging with the interview data in an ideal Hermeneutic standard.

The final step for analysing this data before crafting the stories involves the removal of extraneous details or information that does not lend itself to furthering the perspectives or phenomena in questions. In the following section, I will present a quote from the transcript with Alpha, and will explain how aspects from the interview that would not lend themselves to the story were removed to keep only the relevant phenomena or plot points in place.

Alpha:

“I feel they are conducting some activities, they could take us and tell us, “See, ma'am? We are taking this. Would you like to do it in your class? If you, let's call your teachers, we'll call them. We also discuss with them.” So, we could also be doing that with our kids, together. So that would be a kind of unity among us, among our kids. And we would also implement certain activities. That is how I feel because when we are doing it, it's normally, see our teaching is I always feel it is, you know. I remember, the Merchant of Venice. Now I remember reading it

once when this Portia in the courtroom tells about mercy. It says mercy is twice blessed, it blesseth one that gives and one that takes. That one thing that I read, when I was 14 years old, is still with me... I feel there is a communication gap, so if we could interchange the knowledge. We (teachers) are experienced, they are novelty, because they have one factor, they have is novelty. Since they are very raw, they have lots of new things they come up with. And over a point of time, our things (methods) became mundane. You know, we lack that novelty. That is also I felt that if they told us then even I would have learned certain new things from them. And probably they would have learned from our experiences. See, it could have been twice blessed, but it never happened. I wanted to learn a lot from them..."

In this quote, I decided that using Alpha's perspective on the lack of communication between public school teachers and TFI Fellows would be ideal to develop the tone and plot in the crafted stories. Therefore, I then focused on removing parts of the quote that would not be used for the story, changing the quote to be structured as follows:

Alpha (Edited):

I feel they are conducting some activities, they could take us and tell us, "See, ma'am? We are taking this. Would you like to do it in your class? If you, let's call your teachers, we'll call them. We also discuss with them." So, we could also be doing that with our kids, together. So that would be a kind of unity among us, among our kids. And we would also implement certain activities. ~~That is how I feel because when we are doing it, it's normally, see our teaching is I always feel it is, you know. I remember, the Merchant of Venice. Now I remember reading it once when this Portia in the courtroom tells about mercy. It says mercy is twice blessed, it blesseth one that gives and one that takes. That one thing that I read, when I was 14 years old, is still with me... I feel there is a communication gap, so if we could interchange the knowledge. We (teachers) are experienced, they are novelty, because they have one factor, they have is novelty. Since they are very raw, they have lots of new things they come up with. And over a point of time, our things (methods) became mundane. You know, we lack that novelty. That is also I felt that if they told us then even I would have learned certain new things from them. And probably they would have learned from our experiences. See, it could have been twice blessed, but it never happened. I wanted to learn a lot from them..."~~

By this process, I was able to remove elements from the interview that would not be overtly relevant towards the process of crafting stories. Crowther et al., (2017, 831) refers to this step in the analysis as 'pruning', allowing the researcher to question whether the remaining text is

suitably representing the interviewee's experiences and whether the story is engaging and developing beyond the meanings of the shared experiences.

The cyclical process of identifying story themes, interpreting the themes from my own experiences as a research, pruning the text and then polishing the text is central to moving from verbatim data in interview transcripts towards crafted stories (Crowther et al., 2017, 831). By repeating this process numerous times, I was able to craft three independent fictional stories to represent the experiences of both the public school teachers and my own time working as a TFI Fellow.

Each crafted story contains unique perspectives and genres. The process through which I arrived at the conclusion to utilise these perspectives and genres is central to answering the research question of "*How can researchers illustrate the perceptions of higher secondary public-school teachers on TFI Fellows through fictional crafted stories?*" and therefore, it would be more relevant to explain my decisions regarding the same in the Discussion section of this study. Before delving into my reasons for writing the stories in the chosen styles, I invite the reader to engage with the crafted stories as they are, attempt to immerse themselves within the experiences shared within and to develop their own perspectives on the shared phenomena.

6 Findings

6.1 The Creeping Dread

For as long as you can remember, the classroom and prestige of being a teacher has been your life's calling. Ignoring the dismissive attitude of those who pursued more socially desirable careers, you worked countless hours and attained the qualifications that would guarantee your role as a teacher in the public education sector of India. Dedicated to educating the next generation of the country, you often see yourself as the master potter, tasked with shaping the potential of hundreds of children on behalf of the government and society.

Admittedly, the last decade of teaching in these public schools has shown you the glaring obstacles that hamper students as well as teachers such as yourself. Poor funding and infrastructure, lack of appropriate manpower, and overcrowded classrooms are a few of the myriad issues that plague not just your school but the majority across the city. You often catch your mind wandering — gazing out at the rusted playgrounds resting upon decade old concrete and gravel — during the much-needed breaks from the classroom during recess. As the students scream and shout, you think about what the local government could do to support you and your colleagues. Countless training sessions, much of which are wasted in pointless small talk and politics among teachers, eat into your energy and motivation to deliver the best quality of education to students in your classroom. While you started this career with youthful energy and enthusiasm, the years have eroded you, leaving a feeling of wading through quicksand. Slowly but surely dragging you down with each step forward, leaving you wondering when someone might throw the figurative rope to safety.

Whispers begin the flutter in from distant schools, the government has heeded the calls for help and have acted at last. The relief begins to set in, the atmosphere in the staff room noticeably lightens and you wonder what type of aid will arrive to the school in the coming weeks. Surely, they would send more public-school teachers. Or maybe the school ranks would be bolstered by administrative staff to reduce the burden of paperwork. At the very least, new desks to replace the crumbling, decrepit wooden skeletons that you've seen haunt the classrooms for over a decade now.

Weeks of anticipation pass by, marked by the seemingly endless wait for relief that you and your colleagues desperately need. There's a knock on the staffroom door. Perhaps this is what

you've been waiting for, you think, as you eagerly hurry to the entrance of the room. Two young, fresh-faced individuals, barely older than the teenage students loitered around the classroom just a few doors down, stand before you. Both wear smiles that stretch across their faces just a fraction too wide. Their eyes gleam, sparkling, but the gaze seems to shoot straight through you, as if you were not standing right in front of them. Never breaking their gaze or their grins, the two step around you into the room, place a formal looking document on the desk and begin speaking. Through your confusion, words like "Fellows", "Teach For India", "For All Children" and "Vision" filter into your ears. The principal picks up the document, looks over it then glances back at the individuals, Fellows as they preferred to be called, and briefly considers the situation. You and the other teachers are informed that the government has allowed a Non-Governmental Organisation, named Teach For India, to work in public schools to help with the struggling education system. With the same bright faces, the Fellows inform the room that they are here to improve test scores, school culture and student learning outcomes. One of them glances over towards you and implies that the current methods of teaching are clearly failing, that they come equipped with the newest and most progressive teaching pedagogies. The atmosphere of the room visibly stiffens at this declaration, all the teachers wondering if these two Fellows, barely out of their teens, truly believe they know better than a room of teachers with decades of experience. The Fellows offer platitudes, that it is not the fault of the teachers that the education system had fallen into disarray and that it would be in the best interest of everyone to work together towards the "vision".

Bewilderment. Bemusement. Outrage. You are embroiled with a variety of emotions, each battling to take control of your words, to voice how you truly felt about this new development. The Fellows declare that they will assume control of English and Mathematics, that you are welcome to observe their lessons to learn the new, *correct* ways to teach. Ignoring your look of incredulity at what was occurring, the Fellows stride out of the room towards the classrooms. As they walk by, you notice that while their smiles remain unchanged, their eyes are now burning with a fervent, almost fanatical gleam, as if they were consumed in their ideology. You turn towards the principal, voicing your misgivings and concerns about the Fellows and this shadowy entity of Teach For India. With a sigh, the principal points to the document, noting that this decision has already been made by the government and is out of the hands of anyone in the room. You and the other teachers are encouraged to accept the situation and make the most of the new Fellows. Afterall, you had been looking for a beacon of aid and perhaps that's what Teach For India was meant to represent.

As the days blend into months, you wonder if your initial misgivings about the Fellows and Teach For India were just misplaced apprehensions. The students seemed to be responding well to their methods and the other teachers in the school have noted that the presence of the Fellows has given them more time to focus on their administrative work. Yet you can't shake off the feeling of unease and dread about the presence of the Fellows in the school. You notice smaller details about the two individuals, such as how their expressions never seem to change from the slightly-too-friendly smiles and that the fanatical gleam in their eyes has only intensified as they spent more time in the class. The most eerie aspect in your opinion is how even though they would maintain strong eye contact when talking to you or the other teachers, it was as if they were looking through you entirely. As if in their eyes, your very existence as a teacher was not worth acknowledging and engaging with you in anything more than empty pleasantries would do nothing to help them achieve their goals. Speaking of goals, you once again find yourself questioning what Teach For India is hoping to achieve. Other than the vague, generic phrases like "all children" and "vision" that you heard at the Fellows introduction, you have not observed anything particularly revolutionary in their actions. Unable to see what you could even do about the situation, you turn back to grading tests, and convince yourself that the unintelligible whispers coming from the classroom next door are just your imagination.

You can no longer lie to yourself. Something has changed in the school in the year since the Fellows have arrived and the aura in the building has become suffocating. The changes were subtle at first. Small actions that you didn't give a second thought to. You were no longer consulted about any changes regarding lessons or test schedules. The classrooms themselves have drastically changed. The rooms were brightly coloured, covered in bright hues, posters and figures plastered across the walls. The shoddy wooden desks had been replaced with vivid red and yellow plastic seats and tables. You always felt that the school needed more colour and posters, to foster a better learning culture, yet the new state of the classrooms was causing you alarm. The whimsical and playful nature of the room was designed to be inviting but you find the atmosphere to be nothing but nauseating. The yellows are blinding, the reds are sweet to the point it is sickening, the air heavy with the scent of synthetic chemicals. The fluorescent lights cast shadows in an unnatural manner. Every lesson you take in the classrooms leaves you disoriented, a deep buzzing in your head.

Oddly, the Fellows and students seemed unaffected by their surroundings. If anything, the Fellows seemed to feed off the new atmosphere, their devotion to the "vision" reaching a fever pitch, driving them into more passionate lectures about values to the students. The students

themselves have become entirely encapsulated by the Fellows. Prior to Teach For India's intervention in the school, the students were rowdy and generally uninterested in their studies, but you knew that they existed within the school's ecosystem with respect and discipline. Now, however, the semblance of order had disappeared altogether. Students used to refer to the teachers as "Sir" or "Ma'am", taking careful care to speak with respect and even admiration towards you and your colleagues. Yet in the last year, that respect had weathered away, with students excitedly referring to the Fellows as "Bhaiya (older brother)" or "Didi (older sister)". You were often rankled by these overtly familiar terms of affection, feeling that they toed the fine line between student and teacher, encroaching on the sacred aura of the "Guru" that was so ingrained in Indian culture. Even worse, the students no longer treated you as they used to in the past. Gone were the soft, downward glances when answering your questions, replaced with straight, sometimes defiant eye contact as if the students believed themselves to be equal to you. You also now see the same fanatical blaze as the Fellows in their eyes, unquestioning loyalty to what the Fellows had supposedly done for them.

Where had it all gone wrong? You and the other teachers had been apprehensive about what Teach For India and the Fellows would do to your space, your school. You heard of other teachers in nearby schools echoing these thoughts, albeit in whispers, so as to ensure the government could not hear. Everyone was delighted with what Teach For India had accomplished; the government, the media and society overall. But what about you? The teacher. The once respected master. The representation of the government's will to mould students into future leaders of the nation. You are left at the wayside, ostracised by the very institution that has given you a place in the school. You thought that the Fellows would be the rope that pulled you out of the quicksand, but now you feel as if you have sunk deeper than ever before. You know it to be true for yourself that these Fellows represented everything wrong with the changing world of education, that you know the right approaches, that your decade of experience has given you incomparable perspective in contrast to the green, untested Fellows. You know why this has happened. The fanatical, the cult-like, the passionate yet misguided young Fellows. It all started when they took their first step into the school. You wish someone would listen; someone would hear the cautionary tales of how your students became indoctrinated into an educational movement. But the true horror lies in the cruel twist that you have become the old, outdated villain of your own story.

6.2 Culture Wars

What does one presume war to look like? Broken buildings, streets strewn with the remnants of empty shells fired from weapons of material destruction. Battle hardened warriors occupy points of strategic interest, stemming the relentless tide of their sworn enemies. Such scenes would be commonplace in the halls of movie theatres or printed across the pages of history textbooks, yet the battle in this story takes place in an entirely unassuming setting. In the humid, sprawling, concrete jungle of Mumbai, a battle has been taking place for over 12 years now. It wages, endlessly and unseen to the eyes of the 25 million people dwelling in the city. It cannot be heard from the bustling streets, and there are no visible indications of its casualties in the narrow alleys across the city. This story tells the tale of the invisible ideological conflict, a war over the value of different cultures that takes place within the public schools of Mumbai.

The public teachers had been working for decades in Mumbai, tasked with providing quality education to the underprivileged children of the city. They were proud of their long-standing traditions, taking pride in their qualifications and years of servitude. However, many of these teachers had grown weary of the lack of support they received from the government, often overworked, and forced to work within crumbling school walls, a metaphor that aptly illustrated the magnitude of the task they were struggling to hold up. Despite these setbacks, the teachers persevered, knowing deep within their hearts that their experience and pedagogical know-how made them the ideal candidates to handle the growing educational crisis.

The warning bells of the conflict to come began when Teach For India, a Non-Governmental Organisation, placed members of their education revolution into public schools. These young adults, known as Teach For India Fellows, entered the classrooms with the aim of providing quality, equitable education to all children across the nation. They were young, passionate, and full to the brim with new ideas and not afraid of innovative approaches to education. Armed with knowledge and pedagogies utilised by teachers in foreign lands, these Fellows were convinced of their mission and ready to oust the outdated, ineffective teaching methods that were at home in these public schools.

The cooperation of the Fellows and public school teachers was meant to be an alliance, one that would allow both groups to work in tandem towards their common goals. But this alliance was always frail, with none of the overseeing stakeholders, (the government or Teach For India) being able to foresee the fundamental differences in approach both sides had adopted. The teachers saw the existence of the Fellows as an intrusion on their authority as teachers, both

within the school and in society. The arrival of the Fellows was interpreted as a slight on the capabilities of the teachers, a symbol heralding the lack of faith in what the teachers represented. The Fellows themselves, despite the insistence of their superiors to respect the insight of the teachers, saw the public school teachers as stubborn, uncaring and jaded. On the other hand, the teachers viewed the Fellows as inexperienced, untrained, arrogant and a threat to the traditions that were central to the teacher's beliefs. With such juxtaposing ideological approaches to what it meant to educate children; it was only a matter of time before the terse alliance became fractured.

The inevitable conflict broke out when the Fellows and teachers clashed on a number of issues, ranging from classroom management to curriculum. The teachers did not appreciate their long-tested methods being questioned, especially with the insistence of the Fellows to utilise styles of teaching that were designed to cater to students in vastly differing social contexts. The Fellows also become frustrated with the teacher's resistance to change and lax attitude towards the students. The pressure from each sides respective overseers did nothing to alleviate this tension, with the government piling more administrative work on the laps of the teachers, claiming that with the inclusion of Fellows in schools, the teachers would have more time to devote to non-academic matters. Teach For India managers and directors pushed their Fellows to achieve better student outcomes and to do a better job of terraforming the educational landscape in schools around Mumbai. The culture clash and the building pressure for both groups eventually led to the breaking point, with battle lines being drawn between the teachers and the Fellows. The teachers bunkered down around their way of teaching and managing the students, becoming increasingly distant and dismissive of Teach For India's project. In a similar vein, the Fellows abandoned any thoughts of deepening their relationship with the teachers, focusing on the classrooms they had been allocated and continuing to teach the students in the ways they had been trained.

As with most conflicts, the group caught in the crossfire tend to be overlooked. In this case, the students were both the victims and tools to the clash between teachers and Fellows. The Fellows encouraged their students to think outside of the box, to challenge authority and adopt innovative solutions to the problems they faced in school. This approach was contentious for the teachers, who felt that fostering this type of mentality within the students would directly challenge their traditional emphasis on discipline and rote learning. The teachers also viewed the familiarity the Fellows were developing with the students as an affront to the cultures and traditions surrounding teacher student relationships in the country. The actions of the Fellows

continued without regard for the opinions of the teachers, with students being whisked away for extracurricular activities, with teachers often lamenting their loss of control and autonomy in the turmoil of the school.

The students continued to bear the brunt of this culture war. They found themselves in the midst of an ideological battle that they could not comprehend, with the classrooms becoming zones of chaos and confusion. They struggled to adapt to the constantly changing battlefield, represented by the incessant changes in teaching methods and behavioural expectations. Classroom disruptions became a more common occurrence, with the students intuitively being able to pick up on the tension between the two sets of educators. The victims of the conflict were caught in the middle, unable to decide who to side with. Should they side with the teachers, the ever-present guardians who, while strict, were the most consistent adult figures in their lives? Or should they follow the sibling-like Fellows, the group who were bringing in fresh and fun ideas to the school, even though they knew that the fellows would leave them once the contracted two-year period was over? Pawns to an ideological tug of war, the students' academic performance dipped, unable to find the ideal harmony between the polarising approaches to education. It was not the responsibility of the students to attain this harmony, after all, they were simply the collateral casualties of this war, attempting to make the most of the circumstances they found themselves in.

The conflict reached a stalemate. Neither side was able to reconcile the cultural differences that were foundational to the beliefs of each combatant. Occasionally, there were breakthroughs between the teachers and the Fellows, with a base level of understanding and cooperation being achieved and a temporary peace reigned in the schools. However, this symbiotic coexistence would shatter when the Fellows reached the end of their period with Teach For India and new Fellows would take their place, ensuring that the cycle of misunderstanding would continue. The war between Fellows and teachers continues to this day, with no clear resolution in sight. The damage from the war still extracts a heavy toll, with generations of students looking back on their days in school with a mixture of fondness and regret. They found themselves reminiscing on their experiences, acknowledging that while they had been given the opportunity receive higher quality education than their peers, perhaps they would have been better off with a stable, more well-rounded approach to their education. The government and management of Teach For India were wilfully blind to the students' trauma caused by this culture war, convinced that they had made significant strides towards creating a more equitable educational system. In the end, it remains to be seen if the teachers and Fellows can attain a balanced,

mutually respectable environment in the schools. Both sides acknowledge that there is value to both approaches to teaching, that a combination of discipline and creativity was key to the end of this conflict. The question remains, however, on when and how that first step to peace could be made.

6.3 Diary Entries

Diary Entry of a Public School Teacher

September 5th, 2022

I woke up early as usual today. I say this often, but the feelings of tiredness and apathy are getting worse with each day. I follow my morning routine, making breakfast and packing lunch for my son and husband before they leave for school and work respectively. The sun hasn't risen by the time I step out of the house and hurry to catch the one train that can get me to school on time. Monsoon has been strong this year and my clothes are soaked through by the time I finish my hour-long train journey. I arrive at the school gates to see some of the students have already begun to filter in, bouncing between puddles and excited for the Teacher's Day celebration that has been in the works for some time now. Some of the students saw me and stopped to respectfully wish me for the occasion, while others (the TFI students as I call them) barely acknowledged me. This lack of respect from the TFI students is nothing new and has been something I've noticed over the last few months, but no matter how much I or the other teachers lecture them, their attitude only seems to get more stubborn.

Speaking of TFI, one of the Fellows arrived at the school (right before the assembly was scheduled to start), strutting in with their far-too-fashionable outfit. They make their way through the gaggle of students, many of whom excitedly exclaimed "Hi Didi (older sister)/Bhaiya (older brother)!", showing the growing lack of discipline and respect in the students. I have to admit that initially, I didn't harbour any negative thoughts towards the Fellows, after all, they and Teach For India had entered into our school claiming that they would be able to help with the problems we were facing. It was nice initially to have more manpower in the school, allowing me and my co-workers to focus on the administrative work the government insisted on piling onto with each passing semester. But the attitude of the Fellows is what I cannot stomach. They're young and come to us with fancy degrees in finance and law, assuming that this type of background would make them better at dealing with the issues in the

school than us teachers. I heard that they had training in teaching methods for only one month! It's unbelievable! Imagine some 23-year-olds coming to my school and expecting me to bend over backwards to accommodate their ideas, all while they think they know better than me. They have been teaching for less than a fraction of the time I've been in this school, and they still haven't asked me about my ideas or thoughts on what the students need. It's as if my qualifications in education (years of studying to get my Bachelors and Masters) don't count for anything to these Fellows. I understand that they have to follow certain guidelines since they work for Teach For India but it's frustrating to feel like my decades of experience and knowledge are being disregarded like this.

Today was especially tough in terms of dealing with their arrogant attitudes. Teacher's day is important to all of us in the school, us teachers as well as the students. It is one of the few days where we can all come together and celebrate what teachers mean to everyone in society. I remember the celebrations during my days in school. While my teachers were strict and insistent on discipline, I had fostered a deep level of respect for them and would never step out of line. It was this respect and admiration of what they represented that helped me develop the values I have today and even motivated me to start a career as a teacher. The Fellows, however, seemingly don't understand the importance of this day and how to honour the hard work of teachers like us. I had worked with my co-workers to organize a special Teacher's Day event during the recess, with the auditorium decorated and ready for some dance or singing performances by the students. In the past years, there was always a sense of excitement in the students as it was a fun occasion for them as well, but this year something felt off. The TFI students were not at all interested in the event, acting as if it was below them to take part with the rest of the school. Some of them even came up to me to ask if it was okay for them to skip the event! In all my years of teaching, this had never happened before, and I was offended with how these students disrespected our long-standing traditions. One of the students also asked if they could leave the school grounds during one of the breaks to go pick up a cake for the Fellows. More than anything else that I had heard or seen so far today, this statement upset me the most. I couldn't understand how these students acted as if they were not a part of the school, almost believing that being in the TFI class gave them permission to ignore the regular school rules and expectations. I strictly told the TFI students that nobody would be given permission to leave the school and that they were expected to take part in school celebrations like every other student in the school. Not only was this proposition offensive to the efforts of the other students and teachers, but it was also a liability since us teachers are responsible for what

happens to students when they are in the school. Letting them leave the premises for any reason could risk them getting hurt and this was unacceptable for me.

A few hours later, I heard a commotion near the school gate. I hurried over to see what the source of the commotion and I saw one of the TFI students arguing with the school security guard. The guard was holding a box and attempting to stop the student from going into the school building. I recognized the student as one of the TFI students from before and asked the guard what had happened. According to the guard, he caught the student attempting to sneak onto the school premises and he had confiscated this box that the student was carrying. I took the student and the box to the staff room and reported the situation to the principal. While she was lecturing the student for their irresponsible behaviour, I checked inside the box and saw a cake frosted with the words “Happy Teacher’s Day Bhaiya & Didi!”. I was furious. Not only had this student disobeyed my orders, but they also intentionally went out of their way to get a cake that was only for their Fellows. At the moment, my anger was entirely focused on the TFI student, but looking back on it now, it is clear that this type of behaviour was the by-product of the style of thinking encouraged by the Fellows. They always let their students speak informally and even allowed them to speak back and question the teachers. I never approved of this style of thinking in classrooms since it caused more indiscipline to fester in the school.

After disciplining the student, the principal and I decided that the cake would be kept in the staffroom and that the Fellows would not be told about this entire incident. We thought it was best to pretend the incident had not happened and just move on with the Teacher’s Day celebrations. We gave the Fellows the benefit of the doubt regarding the cake, as the students were prone to acting on their own and surely the Fellows wouldn’t have allowed any of their students to take the risk of leaving the premises. However, a short while afterwards, one of the Fellows came into the staffroom and inquired if any student had left a cake in there. They said that because the students were so excited about doing something for Teacher’s Day, they had given one of them permission to go buy a cake. The principal and I couldn’t believe our ears. Not only was the Fellow showing a blatant disregard for the school rules, they also were inadvertently fostering a division, with one side being TFI associated and the other being the rest of the school. They didn’t bother to think about how other students and us teachers might feel about the idea of a separate celebration being held. The Fellows didn’t have any regard for the importance of showing a united front to the students, that all of the teachers in the school were working together for the betterment of the children in the building. For all their talk about

equitable education and working for “all” children, these types of actions clearly make a distinction and hierarchy within the school for everyone to see.

The Fellow was not allowed to take the cake and was reprimanded by the principal for their actions. I noticed that the Fellow seemed entirely dismissive of what the principal was saying, as if this entire incident was just an annoyance for them. The remainder of the day passed without any further flare-ups, although it was obvious to everyone present (especially the students) that there was a strong sense of tension between us and the Fellows. The Fellows were uninterested and distracted during the celebrations, an attitude that spread to the TFI students as well. Overall, the excitement at the start of the day had petered out and left a sour taste in the mouth of every person involved.

I’m not sure how much longer this situation can last in the school. The Fellows have another year and a half left in the school and I just don’t see how their attitude is going to change in that time. We all want what is best for the students, but they have to respect the values of being a teacher in these types of schools, such as a strong belief in discipline and order. Today was another example of the difficult circumstances’ teachers like me are facing. I just hope that something can change, and the Fellows will come to respect our traditions and values.

Signed,

A Public School Teacher

Diary Entry of a TFI Fellow

September 5th, 2022

Today was an interesting day at school. I woke up early to get ready for the day ahead, taking time to make myself breakfast and listen to a podcast to get motivated for the day. I was considering taking public transport to get to school, but seeing the torrential rain belting the city, I elected to carpool with another co-fellow who worked in the same locality. The rain made traffic crawl to a standstill, so I barely managed to reach school in time for the morning assembly at 8AM. I normally make it a point to reach school earlier than this, but I knew that I wasn’t too late, so it shouldn’t be an issue with the teachers in the school. When I arrived, I saw the usual troublemakers of my class jumping around in puddles and making a racket that I have come to grow fond of over the last few months. No matter how groggy I am in the morning,

hearing my students shout out to me when I arrive at school is definitely one of the highlights of the day. I noticed one of the teachers standing near the gate, with their ever-present stoic look towards me and the students as I greeted them before heading into the classroom. It took me a while to notice, but the teachers in this school certainly don't seem to appreciate the fact that the students refer to me and my co-fellows as "didi" or "bhaiya". I don't really understand why they get so stuck on this topic so often, it's just a term of endearment from the students. Plus, we Fellows are hardly a decade older than the students in our class, so being called "sir/ma'am" just feels awkward and far too formal. The logic behind dropping these formal titles was something I learned during my training institute before joining TFI, with the organisation's managers making it clear to us that keeping strict and rigid boundaries between Fellows and the students would never let us achieve our goal of creating excitement and passion for learning in our classrooms.

Coming back to the start of the day, the students were very excited about what they had planned for Teacher's Day, and it seemed like they had been preparing a surprise for us for a long time now. As excited as I was about what my class had planned, I was a bit concerned about how the school teachers would react to finding out that we would be having a smaller celebration just in our classroom. I remember how the Teacher's Day celebrations used to happen back when I was still in school. Bland, lifeless events full of speeches and teachers just droning on and on about discipline, order, and academic success. Knowing the teachers I worked with, today's celebration would be no different and I was already feeling unenthusiastic about it. This is one of my major gripes with how the teachers in the school operated, everything had to be done according to tradition or needed to have some big life lesson for the students. These last few months have been especially difficult with how stubborn they can be. We were warned at the training institute that getting the teachers to agree with our methods would not be easy, but I never expected progress to be this slow. They were insistent on doing things as they always had, saying that it had worked for them for all the years they had been working in schools. I don't discount their experience, but I always wonder why they seem so reluctant to even think about the newer styles of teaching we were using in the classrooms. I feel like they judge me and my co-fellows just for how young we are, that our lack of experience means that we won't have any meaningful ideas on how to change the issues in education in India.

After the morning class had concluded, some of my students came up to me and asked if they could quickly step out of school to go pick up a cake they had ordered for the class celebration. Normally, I would have immediately shot down the idea since I knew that the students were

not supposed to leave the school except for special circumstances. I told them that it was against the rules, and that they should have picked up anything they needed for the party yesterday or before school had started. However, the students continued to insist and plead, saying that the bakery was just around the corner from the school, that they would be back in less than 5 minutes. I admit, of late it was getting harder for me to be stern with the students because of how much we had bonded during our lessons, and I found myself unable to say no to the excited faces of the students. I remembered my manager telling me during a training session that it was important to let the students gain experiences outside of the classroom and that it was our responsibility as Fellows to help foster values around leadership and accountability. Perhaps this was one of those learning experiences so, slightly reluctantly, I told them that one of the students could quickly step out during the recess, but only if they took permission from one of the teachers or the principal first. My students were thrilled about this and quickly ran off towards the staffroom to find one of the teachers. It was nice to see them so excited over a celebration that I personally found to be nothing more than a formality.

Later in the afternoon, I saw some of the students from before sitting around their desks in a dejected manner. Wondering what had happened, I went up to them and asked why they had lost all of their earlier excitement. It turns out that the students hadn't got permission to go pick up the cake, but one of them had gone ahead and done it anyway. Naturally the security guard had caught them and eventually the teachers and the principal became aware of what was going on. Asking some more questions, I found out that the teachers had confiscated the cake and cancelled any plans my students had for their own Teacher's Day celebration. The worst part, however, was that the teachers had employed their usual method of "disciplining" the student, using a form of corporal punishment to make their point. Punishments of this type were illegal but still very commonly utilised by teachers, especially in lower income public schools such as the one Fellows like me were placed in. It is an issue that many in TFI are aware of but there has never been a clear approach to ensure this practice did not continue, considering how it is an act that has a long history in the cultural fabric of India. Fellows themselves would never resort to this form of disciplining yet the organisation recommended Fellows to avoid directly confronting teachers about corporal punishment.

Considering all of this, I decided against raising that particular issue with the teachers and elected to placate the situation by resolving the situation around the celebration and cake. I entered the staffroom and politely asked if it was possible for me to take the cake and continue with our own Teacher's Day celebration. To my surprise, the principal was convinced that I

had given permission to the student to leave the school premises, to which I explained that I had only suggested that the student could do so if they could get permission from any of the other teachers. Despite this, the principal and teacher seemed somewhat hostile towards me, berating me for allowing such an incident to occur. They went on to accuse me and the other Fellows of not considering the feelings of other students and teachers, that the TFI Fellows were responsible for creating an atmosphere of exclusion to people not involved with TFI. I was hurt by these accusations and although I tried to explain that the celebration was not meant to undermine the main event in the school and that other students and teachers were always welcome to join the smaller celebration, the teachers were not interested in listening. They continued their lecture and informed me that no separate celebration would be allowed and that the cake would remain in the staffroom. I couldn't help but feel disappointed at the situation since I knew how excited the students had been about having their own class celebration. I think that the teacher noticed my disappointment, but they continued to maintain their apathetic aura, as if they wanted nothing to do with either me or the other Fellows.

At the end of the day, the other Fellows and I attended the main school celebration for Teacher's Day. As expected, it was a dull affair with many speeches by the principal and teachers. There were some small performances by other students, but the entire mood of the event was flat and uninteresting, not surprising given how disappointed many of the students were at the actions of the teachers. I went home afterwards, reflecting on how the teachers' insistence on order and tradition hampered the joy and creativity of the students in the school. These students deserved the chance to enjoy a fulfilling and fun school life, something that the other Fellows and I have vowed to help build in our time in this school. Events like today tend to get me disappointed initially, but now that I have had some time to process what happened, I am more motivated than ever to work hard to change the perspectives of the teachers and help achieve our vision for equitable education for all children in the school.

Until next time,

A TFI Fellow

7 Unpacking the Analysis and Related Discussion

In this section of the study, I will elaborate on the Findings section in order to highlight the outcomes of the analytical method of Story Crafting. Utilising the theoretical and methodological concepts of Hermeneutic Phenomenology, I will explain the connections from the outcomes of the analysis and the respective sections from the crafted stories. Understanding the thought process through which I was able to arrive at the form of the crafted stories from the collected interview data will allow readers of this study to reflect on my answer to the research question of “*How can researchers illustrate the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers about TFI Fellows through crafted stories?*” In order to explain how I have attempted to arrive at an answer to the research question, this discussion will be divided into two sections. The first section will articulate the perceptions that were derived from the interview data and how they were represented in the crafted stories. To highlight the Hermeneutic viewpoint of this thesis, it will also include personal reflections on the analytical and crafting process. The following section will engage with the methodological implications of this study, to illuminate my own journey of utilising Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Story Crafting. This will include considerations for how this methodological approach could be incorporated by other researchers to create novel and accessible research in education.

7.1 Understanding Perspectives & the Crafted Stories

By the nature choosing fiction, the story lines I developed in the crafted stories are subject to embellishment and slight exaggeration to create the appropriate tension and atmosphere for the stories. However, each element of the story, from the genre to the specific actions or plot devices are derived from the analytical process of interpreting and reimagining the shared experiences of the interviewees and myself. The actions of characters related to public school teachers were informed by experiences or feelings described by the interview participants during the data collection stage. This section will highlight why these plots, genres and points of view were selected to be a part of the crafted stories, and how these stories attempt to reflect the perceptions of the public school teachers.

7.1.1 General Comments

At one point in the writing process, I considered listing the themes and perceptions explicitly (either before or after each crafted story) to guide the reader to better understand what the story was attempting to convey. However, when considering the importance of Hermeneutics in this study, I felt it was more appropriate to allow the reader to engage with the stories on their own terms, without influencing their own understanding of what the stories would represent. This approach was influenced by the idea of the Hermeneutic Circle, wherein the process of interpreting a text is influenced through the interpreters own preconceived prejudices and perceptions (Martin, 1972, 97). By highlighting to the reader which aspects of the stories were derived from either the teachers' experiences or my own, or by explicitly stating the themes of each story, I would be entering into the interpretative process of the reader. As a consequence, the readers would not be able to appreciate their own Hermeneutic journey of interpreting and deriving personal meanings from the stories. Therefore, I allowed the reader to engage with each story without my own interference, to ensure a true, free exploration of whatever themes and meanings they may find.

Further, when writing the crafted stories, I considered whether it would be appropriate to highlight parts of the story that were interpreted or paraphrased directly from the interview data. Highlighting the text would potentially allow readers to differentiate between sections of the stories that were crafted by me and sections that were the result of interpreting the teachers' responses to interview questions. Writing stories through Hermeneutic Phenomenology is not simply about representing what the interview participants said and extrapolating that against the interpreter's own beliefs, rather it is the action of creating stories that represents the fusion of horizons that occurs when the interpreter engages with the verbatim data (Crowther et al., 2017, 827). As Crowther et al. (2017, 827) explain, the story crafting process is more concerned with readers engaging with the shared phenomena between the researcher and participants, rather than representing a single sides understanding of the phenomenon. The nature of a shared crafted story is explained by Crowther et al. (2017) as "A shared story...is neither the teller's, nor is it the reader's; the story is communal and shared through and through" (828). Therefore, the crafted stories should not be formatted to distinguish between my own personal reflections and those of the interview participants. With this in mind, I eventually decided against this formatting approach in order to keep in line with the intention behind using Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

During the analysis of the interview data, I came across an interesting perception on behalf of the public school teachers. When the interview participants were asked about their impressions of the TFI Fellows (Question 6 and 7 in the annexed Interview Questions), the teachers' overall perception of TFI Fellows could be understood from either a positive or negative angle. The responses when referring to TFI Fellows as a non-personal entity were largely negative, indicating the perceptions of distrust, lack of collaboration and questioning of authority were focused more on what the Fellows represented on an organisational level. Examples of this can be seen through responses of Alpha and Delta when they stated respectively "... *most of my colleagues wherein they (TFI) were employed, they had the same issues. So, I felt it is the strategy of the organization rather than the individual...*" and "*See the TFI has a very different norms and conditions and their way to look for towards the students is also very different.*" In these cases, all subsequent responses about TFI Fellows referenced back to the organisation of TFI, which indicated to me that the teachers were more unhappy with what the Fellows were representing rather than the individuals themselves. Indeed, other interview samples indicate that the public school teachers had actually come to appreciate the individual Fellows who were working alongside them. In reference to this perception, Beta stated "*I think this may not be a personal problem, just like the organizations that they have provided to the teachers through the same rules and regulations, the Fellows have to abide by these rules.*" This point can be further corroborated by Gamma's statement "... *but all the Fellows I've worked with since 2016 has been very enjoyable...*" From these statements, it can be said that the perceptions of the public school teachers on the TFI Fellows changed towards a positive tone when considering the individual in the role, in contrast to their perceptions of the role itself. When interpreting this division of perceptions, I came to the conclusion that the perceptions around the entity of a TFI Fellow were more relevant to answering the research question of "*How can researchers illustrate the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers about TFI Fellows through crafted stories?*" and consequently the crafted stories were written to represent the more negative associations the teachers held about the concept of TFI Fellows.

7.1.2 Recurring Perceptions

Through the analytical process of this research, I strived to identify distinct themes and perceptions to separate into different crafted stories in an effort to create a direct sense of immersion for the reader. However, categorising the perceptions of the public school teachers into different stories only resulted in a limited creative output when writing, hampering the

ability to aid the reader towards finding their own hidden meanings in the stories (Giles, 2008, 91). Therefore, I came to the decision of incorporating recurring perceptions in each story in order to highlight aspects from the interview data that I felt were central to the understandings of the public school teachers. These recurring perceptions of the public school teachers, which I hope can be interpreted from the crafted stories, can be listed as:

- administrative overload
- infrastructural and staffing issues
- cultural ideas around discipline
- feelings of loss of control or exclusion
- feelings of distrust
- conflict/clashes

For example, the line *“Poor funding and infrastructure, lack of appropriate manpower, and overcrowded classrooms are a few of the myriad issues that plague not just your school but the majority across the city”* (from *The Creeping Dread*) represents sections from the interview transcripts where the participants referenced infrastructural and staffing issues they faced in their schools. These issues were repeated multiple times in the interview transcripts by each interviewee, allowing me to utilise this perception as a central aspect in all the crafted stories. Similarly, as shown in the example in the Analysis chapter, each participant felt it was important to mention their perceptions on how TFI Fellows handled or affected the students’ discipline. Consequently, ‘discipline’ became a recurring plot device in each crafted story. This practice of representing recurring perceptions in all the stories is one of the creative methodological tools which allowed me to highlight the important perceptions to the reader.

With regards to answering the research question, these recurring perceptions must be viewed in light of the philosophical and theoretical framework that was used in this study. At this particular point in the discussion, I will endeavour to explain how the recurring perceptions were constructed from the analysis by use of the various theories in the philosophical and theoretical framework.

To begin with, the perceptions in the crafted story were influenced through the use of the Peircean Perception Theory. One of the key aspects of this Perception Theory is the concept of ‘perceptual judgments’ which can be understood to be as the act of comparing what a percept may or may not be (Barnham, 2015, 8). In other words, the act of understanding a percept or phenomena may be seen as a relational construct, with percept’s only existing in an individual’s

mind as a comparison to prior percept's they have perceived (Barnham, 2015, 8). With respect to how this allowed me to insert the participants perceptions into the crafted stories, it became a matter of reading their statements that were more negative by nature. For example, perceptions around discipline and conflict were inferred through the comparative statements made by the public school teachers, where they spoke about their own ideals of what discipline should look like or about preferring an accordant atmosphere in the school. According to Almeder, (1970, 105–106) the Peircean Perception Theory would stipulate that percept is relationally defined by what a percept is not. Applying this to the previous example, it becomes clear that the perception of the participants in relation that they would prefer more discipline and an accordant atmosphere can also be understood that the presence of TFI Fellows results in more indiscipline and feelings of conflict in the school.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory also plays a significant role in how the crafted stories draw out the perceptions of the public school teachers. The perceptions around feelings of distrust and exclusion in the public school teachers are essential themes in the crafted stories, indicating that the interview participants self-belief in their ability to teach were notably impacted by the presence of TFI Fellows in the school. Zimmerman (1995, 203) references how stakeholders in education are subject to the factors influencing beliefs around self-efficacy, although their literature is more specifically focused on impact of self-efficacy on students. However, these same principles around self-efficacy can be applied to the public school teachers of this study, with a particular focus on how the presence of TFI Fellows induced stress into the environment around the school for the teachers. The perceptions of distrust and feelings of exclusion can be understood to have negatively affected the self-efficacy of the public school teachers, a point that I emphasised at various points in the crafted story. The crafted stories indicate that the public school teachers spent a significant amount of their time focusing on the actions and impact of the TFI Fellows on the culture of the school, impacting their abilities to carry out their regular duties as teachers, such as completing curriculum requirements and administrative tasks. In this sense, the crafted stories also reflect the neglect the students at the hands of the two sets of educators which can be attributed to the dwindling self-belief on the part of the teachers to adequately oversee classroom management and academic delivery (Platt, 2017, 17). With the constant negative perceptions of the TFI Fellows, the public school teachers were constantly focused on the environment of distrust and stress, a factor that eventually led to the participants questioning their importance and role in the Indian public education system (Biglan, 1987, 12).

Further, the perceptions of public school teachers in relation to administrative overload and infrastructural/staffing issues are closely related to the growing influence of neoliberalism in how public schools are being managed in India. Hill & Kumar (2012, 15) talk about the how neoliberalism influences government actions with respect to the allocation of funds and resources to public school systems, with the services provided by NGO's and private actors in education systems being one of the core factors in this regard. Since private actors are assuming more of the burden of educating students on behalf of the government, government officials feel that there is less of a requirement to invest in teaching professionals and administrative staff in their public schools (Hill & Kumar, 2012, 16–17; Ulleberg, 2009, 16). The logic behind such actions could be dictated by education officials seeing that the teaching burden has reduced for the public school teachers (due to NGO's like TFI assuming teaching positions in the schools), meaning that these teachers can now reinvest their time into the administrative tasks required to run the schools. Consequently, the public school teachers of this study reference the increasing administrative workload in conjunctions with the lack of supportive administrative staff as one of the mitigating factors in their ability to deliver quality education.

7.1.3 The Creeping Dread

The central theme of all the stories in this study are based around helping the reader to understand perceptions of this specific demographic of public school teachers, the first story 'The Creeping Dread' attempts to do so through what was the most difficult part of the creative and interpretative process for me. In particular, the use of second person tense as well as the genre of 'Horror' made crafting this story notably challenging. Utilising first person or third person tenses are traditionally easier for readers to be able to put themselves in the shoes of the characters in a story, with the linguistic limitations (notable in the almost required repetition of 'you' when writing) of using second person making it jarring and unintuitive for readers to connect with (Delconte, 2013, 56; Varela & Shear, 1999, 2). However, I intentionally decided to use the second person point of view in this story to aid the reader in immersing themselves deeper into the feelings and experiences shared (Delconte, 2013, 57). Further, using this particular point of view helps with delivering the dominant feelings and perceptions experienced by the interview participants of this study, namely feelings of dread and anxiety.

The genre of 'Horror' also allows the reader to be fully immersed in these feelings, allowing the story to become significantly more impactful. The story line of 'The Creeping Dread' was

informed repeated mentions and references to specific feelings of distrust and apprehension towards the TFI Fellows from the public school teachers. In the interview with Alpha, they stated *“To be very frank, in my circle, I was told by many of my colleagues “don't incorporate them. It will lead to trouble””* which indicated to me that these feelings of distrust and hesitancy were not limited to just the interview candidates, it was a perception shared by other public school teachers as well. By identifying this as a perception that set the underlying tone of other responses in the interviews, I decided that this perception could form the foundation of one of the crafted stories.

The feelings expressed from this story are also derived from an application of Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory during the interpretative process. While the teachers never explicitly stated that their perception on TFI Fellows directly affected their self-confidence related to teaching ability, it could be inferred from their responses that there was an inherent effect on their beliefs. Platt (2017, 18) articulates one of the sources of self-efficacy in teachers as that of physiological state, wherein levels of stress in their surrounding environment can directly affect a teachers self-determined efficacy. Drawing on this logic, my interpretation of responses such as *“...eventually led to lot of frictions and I believe kids are very smart to understand if there are frictions within teachers, something that is not right. So that one point I wasn't knowing what is happening in these (TFI) classrooms. How they are doing it, what they are doing, all the wh's of teaching I wasn't aware at all”* from Alpha indicated that environment around the public school was causing stress and confusion in the minds of the teachers. This interpretation can be understood to imply that the presence and actions of TFI were indirectly impacting the teachers' beliefs on self-efficacy. During the story crafting process, I utilised this understanding to build up the sense of loss of control and hopelessness in the main character of the story. This aspect is particularly notable in the line *“You thought that the Fellows would be the rope that pulled you out of the quicksand, but now you feel as if you have sunk deeper than ever before.”*

7.1.4 Culture Wars

The second crafted story of this thesis, 'Culture Wars', guides readers through a story that has been written in a fashion similar to reports from conflict zones. The third person view point of the stories traditionally caters towards creating and building upon the experiences of human phenomena (Varela & Shear, 1999, 1). The story was written to highlight the perceptions of public school teachers on the ideological clashes that took place between them and the TFI

Fellows. Throughout the interview process, the teachers mentioned at length the struggles they faced with the TFI ideology such as teaching methods, Fellow attitudes, student-teacher interactions, and curriculum issues. Highlighting this point, Beta stated “*And one of the biggest differences I saw was that they cannot compare to professional teachers... they did not have the experience to teach how you should do lesson planning, how to enter the class/school, how to motivate students classroom situation...*” From similar interview responses, I could identify multiple themes that focused on ideological differences between the two sets of educators. These themes could be represented as a perception on ‘clashes/conflicts’, which eventually became the central perception when crafting the second story. Therefore, I decided to write the story from the angle of a report commentating on the cultural/ideological clashes between the public school teachers and TFI Fellows.

‘Culture Wars’ serves to build on the feeling of a never-ending, tug of war that takes place in the schools and classrooms. From my own experiences as a TFI Fellow and my interpretations of the public school teachers’ responses, there is a shared understanding that the students suffered from the lack of cohesion and collaboration in the classroom. While the story represents it a more dramatic fashion to fit into the conflict zone setting, the situation in reality has students dealing with academic inconsistency. The quote from Beta’s interview above also addresses this idea, that students were not able to keep up academically due to the different approaches to teaching practices or curriculum. The story is also meant to represent the irony of the entire conflict between TFI Fellows and public school teachers, wherein both groups are meant to work towards the benefit of the students but the clash results in the opposite for the students. Indeed, Delta speaks about the student outcomes in their school, stating “... *first batch of my SSC (students) with the TFI Fellows were passed in 18/19 and we had a very bad result.*” This perception around the academic problems for the students can be seen in the parts of the crafted story that reference the ‘ideological tug of war’ that was taking place in the public schools.

Finally, ‘Culture Wars’ also serves as a representation of the neoliberal nature of TFI intervention in public schools. This aspect of the story was not derived directly from the interview data, rather it was created from introspection on my own thoughts relating to TFI’s position in the education sector. In connection to this, some of the above quotes from the interviewees are also in reference to the teaching practices of TFI, although they are largely framed around concepts of discipline and classroom control. From a Hermeneutic perspective, I reflected on my personal experiences at TFI and working in a public school to write the line

“Armed with knowledge and pedagogies utilised by teachers in foreign lands, these Fellows were convinced of their mission and ready to oust the outdated, ineffective teaching methods that were at home in these public schools.” This approach towards recalibrating education to fit a global standard, at the expense of possibly contextually adapted education practices, is a hallmark of growing neoliberal trends in education across India (Kumar, 2008, 13–14).

7.1.5 Diary Entries

The ‘Diary Entries’ story acts as the culminating piece to the three crafted stories in this thesis. While the previous two crafted stories utilised more nuanced, layered approaches and writing devices, this story takes a more direct approach towards representing the perceptions of the public school teachers. The use of the first-person point of view in both the diary entries allows the reader to directly place themselves into the experiences of a public school teacher and a TFI Fellow (Varela & Shear, 1999, 2). The plot of each entry is intended to mirror each other, with my intention being to highlight how each character has different perceptions when considering the same events. Utilising the Peircean Perception Theory to inform this approach to crafting the story, an individual’s perceptions are understood to be subject to the lived experiences of that person, creating a subjective understanding of the events or phenomena in question (Almeder, 1970, 101).

The first diary entry takes the point of view of a public school teacher, highlighting an entire day at school, working alongside TFI Fellows and follows the teachers’ perceptions of the events that unfold over the day. From a writing perspective, this diary entry was straightforward in terms of incorporating the perceptions drawn from the interview data. In some cases, the lines utilised in the story were almost verbatim to what an interviewee stated, as seen in the line *“...in with their far-too-fashionable outfit”* which was derived from the statement *“but what I know about TFI from last 10/12 years when you (TFI Fellows) come to school, you're well, fully dressed up”* made by Delta. In other instances, I used statements by the participants that were in reference to other points of discussion, yet they were still relevant after I interpreted and connected them to other perceptions I had observed. To further accentuate this point, I interpreted statements from Beta *“they cannot compare to professional teachers... Those who have professional courses like D.Ed, B.Ed. and M.Ed”* and *“Now we have been here for 10 years in government school, but also have 16 years teaching experience”* to craft parts of the story that would reference the experience and qualifications possessed by the public school

teachers. Combining this with other statements by the interviewees with reference to perceptions of their expertise being ignored or not valued by the TFI Fellows, I created the following line “*It’s as if my qualifications in education (years of studying to get my Bachelors and Masters) don’t count for anything to these Fellows.*” Admittedly, many of the themes and perceptions used in the first diary entry are drawn from the recurring perceptions that have been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This was an active choice on my part to guide the reader more directly through what the participants have said or implied during their interviews, establishing a clear understanding that could then be juxtaposed to the second diary entry of the story.

While the diary entries were relatively less nuanced than the previous crafted stories, there were some aspects of these entries that I feel would benefit from some explanation behind their intent or meaning. To begin with, I would draw attention to the beginning of each entry, where both characters are navigating through the monsoon struck streets of Mumbai. In the case of the public school teacher, they were shown to be waking up at a much earlier time, and using public transport to find their way to the school. In contrast, the TFI Fellow had a relatively more relaxed beginning to the morning and used private forms of transportation to arrive at the school. The purpose behind setting up each entry in this manner was to highlight to the reader the difference in social and economic backgrounds between the teacher and Fellow. As established in the Context chapter, TFI Fellows are young professionals with generally highly sought after qualifications, meaning that their financial status could allow for more expensive forms of transport. Secondly, the beginning of the teacher’s entry is also meant to highlight the difference in lifestyles between the two characters, with the line “*I follow my morning routine, making breakfast and packing lunch for my son and husband before they leave for school and work respectively*” intended to represent social identities of the teacher beyond just that of being an educator. Indeed, in the interview with Alpha, they allude repeatedly towards how their identity of being a mother has influenced their perceptions on the Indian education system. In this regard, I decided to include this notion of different social identities on a slight level to further add to the depth of each character in the crafted stories.

The second diary entry has the reader enter into the point of view of a TFI Fellow, following the exact same events that took place in the previous diary entry. In terms of writing this story, I personally found this to be the most challenging part to write in the entire story crafting process. While the previous entry and stories were informed from my interpretations of the verbatim data, the TFI Fellow diary entry was predominantly influenced by my own reflections

on personal experiences in TFI. As established already, Hermeneutic Phenomenology is not about just articulating the experiences of the research demographic, it is the blending of the researchers prejudices with the interpretations of the interview participants (Crowther et al., 2017, 827). Therefore, crafting a story as a TFI Fellow was an exercise in reimagining the shared experiences from the verbatim data with my existing preconceptions. Crafting the story of 'Diary Entries' was also a journey in understanding how the writing process was influenced by my existing prejudices, something that I noticed in earlier drafts of the story which were heavily favouring my perspectives as a TFI Fellow. Eventually, through an exhaustive cycle of reinterpreting, reimagining and rewriting, I was able to arrive at the current form of the crafted story which I hope represents the perspectives of myself and the public school teachers in a more blended and balanced manner. While the research question of this study deals with perspectives of the public school teachers, I believe that by highlighting my hermeneutic approach to work with the data, I am also arriving at an answer to the methodological considerations of the research question

Essentially, the overall intention of crafting these two mirrored, sometimes polarising stories, was to allow the reader to immerse themselves into the complex dynamic and shared understandings between these two sets of educators.

7.2 Methodological Implications

This section will consider my reflections on the process of utilising Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Crafted Stories and how I attempt to answer the research question of this study "*How can researchers illustrate the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers about TFI Fellows through crafted stories?*" Explaining the answer to this research question with respect to the 'researcher' requires an account of my thoughts on utilising Story Crafting framed under the philosophical notions of Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

From this experience, I have arrived at some conclusions surrounding the use of Crafted Stories as a tool in Hermeneutic Phenomenological research. To begin with, the literature surrounding the use of Story Crafting/Hermeneutic Phenomenology indicates that this analytical method has been used predominantly in fields related to Nursing or Midwifery, as seen through the research presented by Crowther et al. (2014), Doering et al. (2022) and Miles et al. (2013). From my research, it would seem that this methodological approach has not been vastly utilised for qualitative research in the field of education. The Hermeneutic journey throughout this entire

thesis has led me to the conclusion that education centric qualitative research is more than suitable for Story Crafting as an analytical tool. Many qualitative research studies are concerned with engaging with human experiences and phenomena, yet this research may find itself to be inaccessible to non-academic readers. By utilising the methods I have explained in this study, researchers may be able to convey the lived experiences of their research demographic in a manner that is easily digestible for the layman reader. Stories, as a construct, challenge the reader to deconstruct and develop their own understanding of the phenomenon being illustrated (Crowther et al., 2017, 833). Therefore, researchers will have an avenue towards bringing the readers of their research into the lived experiences of students, teachers, administrators or any other stakeholder in education.

Further, writing crafted stories in this fashion will allow researchers to engage with the readers on a plane that is normally not utilised in other educational research, namely the plane of 'emotion' (Peck & Mummery, 2018, 5). Speaking from the Hermeneutic perspective towards research, crafted stories will allow the readers to delve into the dialogue between the researcher and the text, a dialogue that inadvertently deals with 'emotions' as they inform the construct of meanings (Peck & Mummery, 2018, 5). The prejudice of emotion can also be inferred to influence the journey within the Hermeneutic Circle and the Fusion of Horizons, an aspect that researchers would hope their readers find most engaging in the crafted stories.

The focus on allowing readers to simply integrate themselves into the shared experiences or phenomena also allows for researchers to engage with their data in a more flexible manner. It serves to repeat that Hermeneutic Phenomenology is not concerned with arriving at a notion of truth, or as Crowther et al. (2017, 833) state "*The purpose of this methodology is thus not to "hammer home" a point or create overly sentimental accounts based on biased perspectives; it is to let texts speak...*" The purpose of a crafted story, therefore, is to create within a medium that will allow for others to gain insight on a specific human experience. What does this mean for the researcher? In my opinion, by not being restrained to provide empirical or verbatim analysis of a shared phenomenon, researchers can embrace the potential of illuminating hidden meanings or perceptions that may not be obvious at first glance. Researchers may also find value in changing their role in relation to the reader, moving away from the position of giving knowledge to being a guide for others to develop their own interpretations. In the case of researchers who have an intimate relationship with the context of their research, as I do in this study, this shift in perceptions towards being the guide allows for a researcher's voice to be integrated and seen at a level which may not be possible in other methodological approaches.

Finally, the interpretative journey of using Story Crafting through a Hermeneutic lens also helps the researcher to develop insight towards their own prejudices, biases, and presuppositions. Hermeneutic Phenomenology requires the researcher to engage with the texts derived from other lived experiences while remaining conscious of the researcher's own background and context (Giles, 2008, 98). The process stipulates that the researcher must remain aware of how the Hermeneutic Circle is in effect while interpreting, to constantly be aware of the how their prior knowledge is being influenced as they actively interpret the data or texts at hand. It is essential to incorporate this outlook in parallel with the Fusion of Horizons by also acknowledging the broadening of the researcher's own horizons as they interact with the horizons being articulated in the lived experiences of the research participants (Dangal & Joshi, 2020, 38). Assuming the researcher takes due care in highlighting and acknowledging their positionality, these pre-existing biases should not be misunderstood as a liability or weakness towards the research, rather it is a strength that should be embraced throughout the research. A study where the researcher is able to constantly show reflexivity in this manner will not only provide insight for the readers, but also allow for researchers to holistically understand their perceptions and thoughts on the phenomena in question.

However, researchers should be aware of limitations of utilising the methodological approach of Story Crafting in qualitative research. Not all qualitative research is focused on perceptions or highlighting deeper meanings of the verbatim text, meaning that studies that are based on answering research questions around content analysis or broader groups of stakeholders would not be suitable for the use of Story Crafting. As stated at multiple points in this study, Story Crafting does not engage with notions of truth and does not concern itself with even stating that truth can be ascertained from Hermeneutic writing (Crowther et al., 2017, 828). In this sense, Story Crafting in Hermeneutic Phenomenology would not be ideal in research studies that are more concerned with arriving at objective answers on people or phenomena. Even when utilising this methodological approach, researchers should be careful to make their interpretative and analytical steps transparent to any reader of the study. Ensuring that the reader is able to clearly understand every step of the analysis lends towards the truthfulness and reliability of the study (Giles, 2008, 99). Researchers must also take care to avoid falling into the 'blindness' of their Horizon of knowledge, to be wary of hyper focusing on developing themes or perceptions from the interview data (Vessey, 2009, 538). If constant reflexivity and awareness are not incorporated into the interpretative and analytical process, researchers risk

losing sight of phenomena or perceptions that may not be obvious at an initial stage (Giles, 2008, 172).

Considering all of these points, I believe that the methods of Story Crafting through Hermeneutic Phenomenology have important and flexible implications to any qualitative research in the field of education.

8 Ethical Concerns, Trustworthiness and Credibility & Limitations

This chapter will explore the ethical considerations of a qualitative research study when using Hermeneutic Phenomenology. I will explain the steps I undertook to preserve the interview participants anonymity and confidentiality. I will also explore notions of trustworthiness and credibility in relation to the methodological aspects of Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Story Crafting. Finally, I will delve into the limitations of this research, in an effort to highlight some steps through which this type of research could be enhanced.

8.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement when conducting qualitative research that explores the human phenomenon. It is essential to inform interview participants about the nature of the research, its purpose, benefits, and potential risks. In Hermeneutic Phenomenology, interview participants may be asked to share sensitive personal data and information about the environment they work in. Therefore, it is important to communicate clearly and openly about the research and gain the participants fully informed consent before continuing with the interview process. I also made it clear to each public school teacher that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point, highlighting that their participation in the research was entirely voluntary. The details of the Informed Consent Form and the Privacy Notice are elaborated upon when detailing the interview process in Section 4.3.3 Conducting the Interviews.

8.2 Confidentiality

In this study, the interview participants were asked questions regarding their educational qualifications and perceptions regarding other individuals in TFI. Since the answers to these questions could be used to identify the interview participants, it was essential to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was maintained. The interviews with each public school teacher were digitally recorded and I ensured that the participants never referenced their names, the name of the school they worked in or any other information that could be used to identify them. Further, each audio file was labelled using pseudonyms and the files were stored in password protected folders to prevent any unwanted access. As informed to the participants,

the audio recordings would only be used for this research, and I committed to deleting all the recordings within 18 months of the date of the interview.

8.3 Trustworthiness & Credibility

Trustworthiness is an important component of any qualitative research as it is essential to convince the reader's beliefs in the methods and findings of the study (Dibley et al., 2020, 151). Establishing the trustworthiness of any Hermeneutic Phenomenological study can be a difficult process due to the nature of this methodology, wherein no studies can be directly compared to establish a standardised criteria of reliability or validity (Crowther & Thomson, 2020, 9). In order to establish this trustworthiness, the researcher must highlight to the reader how the methodological steps were conducted in an open and transparent manner (Giles, 2008, 98–99). In this regard, I strongly believe that I have elaborated at length about how I worked with the data, analysis, and findings of this study to ensure a high level of transparency at each step of the process. In this regard, the trustworthiness of this study has been established through the understanding of how I arrived at each Crafted Story from the verbatim data of the interview transcripts. This transparency also lends itself to validating the credibility of this research, as Dibley et al. (2020, 152) explain that the integrity of any study is entirely dependent on the researcher clearly detailing the use of the interview data towards the findings through thorough examples and reflections.

8.4 Limitations

Despite my confidence in the trustworthiness and credibility of this research, there are some limitations towards the applicability and transferability of my findings and implications. Perhaps the most impactful limitation of this study was the need to change the methodology from Phenomenology to Hermeneutic Phenomenology. From the planning stage of this study, I was focused on using Phenomenology as the methodological approach, which informed how I created interview questions for the public school teachers. However, due to a lack of interview data, I decided to utilise Hermeneutic Phenomenology instead as I felt this approach would better suit the collected interview data. The main limitation in this regard was that the interview questions were not designed to bring out a story from the interview participants, rather they were structured to highlight their perception about TFI Fellows. The analytical process of crafting the stories was then hampered due to not having a clear story driven direction in the

verbatim data, which I believe to be a significant limitation towards the foundation of the crafted stories.

Another limitation which must be taken into consideration is my own history as a TFI Fellow and the related prejudices or biases I held towards the idea of public school teachers as well as TFI Fellows on a conceptual level. As a methodology, Hermeneutic Phenomenology encourages the researcher to bring in these prejudices and presuppositions when engaging with the verbatim data (Dangal & Joshi, 2020, 36). However, there is a fine line with respect to the representation of 'truth' when crafting the stories, requiring me to be constantly aware of whether my own horizons of understanding were overpowering or influencing the horizons articulated by the public school teachers in the interviews. I must, therefore, acknowledge that my own prejudices could have influenced my interpretation of the perceptions of the public school teachers. Despite this potential pitfall, I believe that I actively and consciously showed reflexivity and awareness towards the Fusion of Horizons that was taking place within me during the analytical process, diminishing the impact of this limitation on the outcomes of this study.

9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study, which utilised Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Story crafting as the main methodological approach, strived to highlight the perceptions of higher secondary public school teachers about TFI Fellows. I laid the foundation of this thesis through the use of a philosophical and theoretical framework, utilising theories around the Hermeneutic Circle, the Fusion of Horizons, Peircean Perception Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, and Neoliberal Theory. The study then moved towards an in-depth review of the literature surrounding the functioning of TFI and other similar organisations.

The process of creating the Crafted Stories for this study has not just been a traditional, methodological approach to verbatim data. The analytical steps towards writing the stories required me to look beyond the perceptions and feelings that were articulated by the interviewees. The Crafted Stories and the Hermeneutic approach asked me to deeply reflect on my prejudices and preconceived biases from my experiences during the TFI Fellowship. These crafted stories are the culmination of a journey in interpretation, understanding and reimagining the perceptions of public school teachers with my own.

Through the findings and discussion, it can be observed that the public school teachers' perceptions of TFI Fellows were negatively associated with the 'role' of a TFI Fellow. The observed perceptions were influenced by a variety of factors, such as administrative overload, infrastructural and staffing issues, cultural ideas around discipline, and feelings of loss of control or exclusion.

This study also contributed to a broader understanding of the methodological implications of Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Story Crafting. This methodological approach allows for researchers to engage with the emotions of their reader through the more digestible format of Hermeneutic writing. Further, Story Crafting provides an avenue to researchers to incorporate their own experiences when they are well versed with the context. By encouraging researchers in education to embrace this approach, future research may allow for readers to develop a deeper appreciation of the shared experiences of all stakeholders in this field. Overall, I seek to emphasise the importance of researching and illuminating the perceptions of public school teachers in relation to TFI and to guide readers through the nuance of the lived experiences of these teachers by virtue of the crafted stories.

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Appendix 1

Master's Thesis Interview Questions

Public School Teachers' Perceptions of TFI Fellows: A Qualitative Study Using Crafted Stories

1. Could you describe your educational qualifications and for how many years you've been working as a (govt) school teacher?
2. Which grade and subject have you been teaching during that time?
3. Have you worked with educational NGOs (such as TFI) during that time? How long did you work alongside them?
4. Could you describe how it was to work alongside the professionals in these organisations? What was their role as per your understanding?
5. On a day-to-day basis, what was the division of teaching responsibilities between you and those professionals?
6. What was your initial impression of the NGOs/professionals when they started working in your classroom?
7. Did that impression change over the time you worked with them?
8. Could you describe the impact of student interaction with NGO professionals?
9. Can you explain what you think is the main difference between what you learn at govt mandated teacher training and what NGO professionals do in classrooms?
10. In your opinion, what do you value most in education?
11. What could such NGOs do to support your own time and professional development, if at all?