Who Are You, Social-Justice-Oriented Teachers? A Three-Dimensional Model for Characterizing Pre-Service Teacher Training for Teaching as a Second Career

This paper focuses on the ideological motivations of pre-service teachers and how they translate these ideological views into their classroom teaching practices. The data for this study was collected using an interpretive qualitative method in which interviews with 15 pre-service teachers were conducted. The data yielded a three-dimensional model characterizing social-justice-oriented teachers. Such teachers aspire to optimize the social and learning circumstances of low socio-economic populations by identifying injustice and applying educational teaching practices in the context of class management.

**Keywords**: social class, cultural awareness, preservice teacher education, teacher education

# Introduction

Many teacher training programs that prepare teachers for working in a public school setting rely solely on the concept of “social justice” as a framework (Kaputska et al., 2009; Kaur, 2012; Zeichner & Flessner, 2009). Accordingly, teachers increasingly describe their attempts to promote equity and justice in P-12 classrooms as teaching for social justice (Dover, 2013). However, the significance of teaching social justice (Castro, 2010) and what practices this teaching begets (Chubbuck, 2010; Whipp, 2013) is still unclear. Attempts to understand the practical meaning of teaching directed at social justice in order to train teachers who can nurture this goal has attracted considerable research interest (e.g., Richmond et al., 2017).

 This article aims to shed light on how pre-service teachers who chose the profession as a second career and are perceived as “justice-oriented teachers” (Whipp 2013) translate their ideological views into improving the social and learning circumstances of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The main motivations of individuals training to become teachers as a second career will be presented. This will be followed by a theoretical framework addressing teachers’ approaches to curriculum planning and how social justice ideology is incorporated therein. We will then discuss the interpretive analysis of seminar research works to reveal mapping of applicable learning practices in low socio-economic schools.

# Theoretical perspectives

Informed by pedagogical perspectives regarding curriculum planning in a social justice context and second career teachers’ motives, this research is framed by the theories of social justice practices presented below.

## Motives of second career pre-service teachers

The motivations for undergoing teacher training has piqued the interest of many researchers (Anthony & Ord, 2008; Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014; Lamport & Lee, 2011 Mayotte, 2003; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Richardson & Watt, 2005; Tigchelaar et al., 2010; Watt & Richardson, 2008). The motivations for choosing teaching as a career have been categorized into three main groups in the existing literature: (a) altruistic motives – characterized by the need to nurture children and improve the face of society (Richardson & Watt, 2005; Theriot, 2007); (b) intrinsic motives – expressing the need to obtain spiritual benefit from the profession such as enjoyment, interest, and creativity; (c) extrinsic motives – obtaining material benefits, such as comfortable working conditions and job security. Chambers (2002) found that the altruistic desire to do the best for children and youth in a multicultural social context is the main motivation for choosing teaching as a second career, reflecting a desire to do the best for such young people (especially in countries where the profession is neither well rewarded nor considered especially prestigious (Donitsa-Schmidt, 2014; Wagner & Imanuel-Noy, 2014)). This data is congruent with the education policies of many countries around the world that seek to narrow social gaps and promote values of equality among school children. Hence, academic teacher education institutions profess that they are striving to create a more just society and integrate aspects of social change into training programs, both at the theoretical and operational levels (such as clinical experience and social involvement).

## Teachers as curriculum planners

Altruistic motives that reflect ideological educational views are likely to be the main motivation for creating social change (Richardson, 1994). Teachers who choose the profession as a second career integrate the knowledge and skills they acquired through their previous careers into their teaching (Chambers, 2002). Therefore, it is expected that they will likely harness these qualifications in their main field of expertise, where they can effect change with relative ease, namely in the process of curriculum planning. In a study that examined teachers’ approaches to curriculum planning processes, a continuum of three strategies was presented, mapping their involvement in a process from passive to independent: curriculum transmitters who pass curricula on as they are written; curriculum developers who adapt learning materials to teaching circumstances, and curriculum makers (Shawer, 2010). Another recent widespread approach is viewing the “teacher as a researcher.” According to this view, teachers are reflective professionals who observe and contemplate their activities and work, coping with difficulties and conflicts in complex situations and drawing upon reflective thinking to propose solutions. Teachers as researchers can introduce changes into their work. This approach finds expression in instructions to teachers to carry out “action research,” which will not only allow them to develop professionally and to understand their practice, but to also contribute to creating knowledge (Sahlberg, 2011; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). At the same time, some consider training teachers to become curriculum planners an important bridge between educational policy and teaching in practice, in that teachers’ professional independence is maintained. Grimmett and Chinnery (2009) even demanded strengthening the autonomous status of teachers and their pedagogic independence in the practical space motivated by a sense of their professional mission. Ben-Peretz (1995) presented a continuum with teachers who interpret curricula at one end. She used the concept “curricular potential” to express the ability to analyze and interpret curricula. In the middle of Ben-Peretz’s continuum is the teacher as a bridge between educational policy and teaching in practice. On the other end of the continuum are teachers who criticize curricula in favor of social justice. In essence, teachers are agents of change, whose role is to operate actively for social justice. In this stream of critical theory, one can find Giroux (1989) and Apple (1995) who viewed the education system as upholding unjust political, social, economic and cultural reality through institutional structures and curricula. Echoing this approach, Cochran-Smith argued that teaching and teacher education are political and ideological actions, which naturally include ideas, principles and use of power. In fact, Giroux (1988) maintained that teachers must be reality-changing intellectuals.

## Curriculum planning and social justice

Dover (2013) presented a conceptual and pedagogical foundation for teaching social justice. She claimed that while contemporary approaches are influenced by a diverse array of educational, philosophical, and political movements, published accounts of teaching social justice rely on five conceptual and pedagogical philosophies: democratic education, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, culturally responsive education, and social justice education.

The present study focuses on how teachers’ identity uniquely contributes to culturally responsive education goals. This is of particular interest to us, because the premise is that the education system is meant to fulfill the role of a social justice agent, which provides resources according to principles of justice: equality, need and fairness. However, in practice, the education system is likely to promote or preserve an unjust situation within school walls, on the basis of ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, gender and more (Okin, 1989). In addition, even when there is agreement about the principles of justice guiding the allocation of resources, some individuals will feel that the division is unfair and sometimes, and they may even feel a sense of injustice and discrimination (Sabbgh & Biberman, 2014).

Among the resources at the macro level (e.g., the right to education) and the micro level (e.g., assigning grades) are those on which teachers have no influence and others they can affect greatly. For example, on the issue of teaching content in the curriculum, some maintain that implementing a hegemonic curriculum disproportionally benefits established groups, and therefore teachers should design curricular justice, instead (Connell, 1993). Hence, according to their view and the context in which they operate, teachers are likely to develop pedagogic practices to achieve social justice (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003).

Dyches and Boyed (2017) presented a modification to Shulman’s Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) model, arguing that it can never be siloed from Social Justice Knowledge and hence suggested a theoretical model segmented into three knowledge domains, Social Justice Knowledge, Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge, and Social Justice Content Knowledge (SJPACK). They argued that “Social justice teacher preparation must be incorporated into methods, content and pedagogy courses so that candidates learn how these domains operate together and not independent of their disciplines” (Dyches & Boyed, 2017, p. 486). However, Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, and Sonu (2010) argued that the term “social justice” has a wide range of meanings and interpretations, and thus, teachers are likely to feel that “social justice teaching” is unachievable and that they cannot implement the required views and practices. Alternatively, since this refers to such a broad umbrella, each teacher is likely to argue that he/she does teach social justice. Therefore, the researchers proposed clarifying that teaching for social justice includes: (a) enacting curricula that integrate multiple perspectives, questioning dominant Western narratives, and being inclusive of racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity; (b) supporting students to develop critical consciousness of the injustices that characterize our society;
and (c) scaffolding opportunities for students to be active participants in a democracy, skilled in forms of civic engagement and deliberative discussion.

Agarwal et al. (2010) mapped the practices of a dozen graduates in a training course dealing with social structure. However, their research focused more on the obstacles that teachers encounter than on how their practices were likely to influence students. Whipp (2013) examined a justice-oriented training program and presented a collection of 17 practices: caring relationships, high academic expectations, skill/content instruction, “funds of knowledge” pedagogies, using student interests, cultural heroes, holidays, building background knowledge, differentiation, high behavioral expectations, consistent structure/routines, “warm demanding,” student empowerment, communicating with parents, using community resources, consciousness-raising, promoting student activism, and advocacy for change in school policies/practices. He argued that among the factors promoting a social justice orientation in teaching, intercultural experiences were emphasized before and during the teacher education, training courses and clinical experience. In addition, administrative and collegial support during the first year of teaching and supportive mentors committed to the idea of teaching for social justice were significant variables (Whipp, 2013).

# Research aims

The aim of this study is to uncover how the attitudes of second career pre-service teachers (PSTs) influence their role as curriculum planners, their interpretation of the school reality they encounter during their clinical experience and how they translate these into classroom practices.

# Context

The research was conducted through the perspective of “a second teacher in the class,” a view that has been evolving over the past decade and which, based on the belief that teacher education institutions must meet the needs of the educational reality, aims to change teacher training. According to this model, teacher education processes are field-based, with pre-service teachers spending three days per work week in schools co-teaching with veteran teachers. Additionally, seven full work days, spread out over the course of the academic year, focus on theoretical studies delivered through guided, independent learning. During their studies, pre-service teachers study subjects such as learning theories and curriculum planning, qualitative research and action research, classroom management, education system policy, and various disciplinary teaching methods.

# Sample

The research pool was comprised of 100 M.Teach pre-service student teachers at the David Yellin College of Education, who chose teaching as a second career. Data was collected using a purposeful sampling strategy (Merriam, 1998) of 15 pre-service teachers who were in the first years of their internship teaching math to secondary school students. Table 1 presents the profile of pre-service teachers in the research group. Of the group, 33.3% were male and 66.7% were female. Their socio-cultural background was relatively homogenous and middle-class. The mean age of the research participants was 35.4, and they all had experience in three different schools with a high nurturing measure (low socio-economic level).

# Methodology

For this study, I drew upon qualitative-interpretive analysis (Charmaz, 2009) with a particular emphasis on inductive-constructivist thematic content analysis in order to gain a detailed understanding of the views and intentions of student-teachers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Therefore, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do second career pre-service teachers perceive their role in curriculum planning?
2. How do these pre-service teachers translate their view of their role into educational practices, as reflected in their research work?

# Data analysis

Thematic content analysis was carried out on 15 seminar research works, which were submitted by pre-service teachers during their curriculum planning course. The premise was that each study is a political act, as it does not merely reflect reality, but through criticism and calling for change, influences and creates it. Pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward a given reality influence their choice of research topic/questions, their research methodology, and the words they use to describe their findings and conclusions, which in turn structure reality (Ife, 1997). In the texts of their seminar works are representations of attitudes, narratives, interpretations, emotions, beliefs, perceptions, identities, and practices. In addition, seminar work research questions represent the challenges they encounter in the field of education. It should be noted here that pre-service teachers were given a broad range of choices for their research topic in the context of curriculum planning.

In order to map “educational practices,” I relied on Evertson and Weinstein’s (2006) definition: “All the actions performed and methods employed performed by teachers whose purpose is to promote a learner’s academic ability, social competences and emotional welfare.” At this stage, a list of practices across a range of issues was consolidated. Some overlapped with those proposed by Whipp (2013), but they had not been categorized in the context of class management. However, sorting them into generalized categories is important in order to simplify the topic and facilitate understanding, as well as to enable the opposite action, i.e., breaking down generalized categories and producing thoughts about new practices. Therefore, at the second stage, the list of practices was categorized. After the initial categorization process, face-to-face interviews were conducted to ask follow-up questions and verify the accuracy of our interpretations.

# Findings and discussion

This section presents the main findings of the research questions: (a) how do second career pre-service teachers perceive their role in curriculum planning processes, and (b) how do pre-service teachers translate these educational views into educational practices and what characterizes these practices, as reflected in their research works? In addition, the connection between the categories of practices identified will be discussed. The content analysis of the pre-service teachers’ research works and their interpretations of their encounters within the education system revealed that they are social justice-oriented teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2008; Giroux, 1989; Whipp, 2013) who see the classroom as an arena for carrying out social justice. This approach was identified according to the three dimensions presented in Figure 1: (a) **The Ideology & Values dimension**; (b) **The ability to observe critically dimension;** (c) **The motivational dimension**, which will be detailed below.

## Dimension I – Ideology and values – sense of social mission in choosing teaching as a profession

In this study, the pre-service teachers expressed a sense of social mission in choosing teaching as a profession and explained that their values and beliefs were their main motivations for choosing the profession. They also stressed the importance of their interest in social benefit, such as the possibility of shaping the future generation, promoting social equality, their desire to contribute to society, and their love for working with children. More details can be found in the chapter “research issue” of their seminar works as well as their statements in personal interviews. Table 2 shows the mapping and frequency of values motivating the decision to take up teaching as a second career in the context of social mission.
Over half of the pre-service teachers (53%) expressed their desire to promote social equality among disadvantaged populations and explained their ideologies about equal allocation of resources and supporting social mechanisms that are likely to improve the social status of these populations. For example, when Natalie was asked what sparked her desire to promote social equality, she presented an ideological view that was instilled in her from an early age. In contrast, Gili described a desire to promote social equality from a practical and critical perspective:

*I chose education because I wanted to contribute to society. I chose math, because something about math terrifies people, it is a discipline that constitutes a selector and maintains positions of power in society. It really shows that there is something in this whole view that completely preserves certain balances of power in society, and I want to really reduce social gaps through math. I must fix the world.*

The pre-service teachers in this group described math as being of secondary importance in relation to the need to teach humanist values. Strong intrinsic motives led them to choose teaching as a second career. Each pre-service teacher had a meaningful personal story or life event that shaped their social views and motivation for choosing the profession.

## Dimension C– Critical observation ability – identify injustice in the social context in the field of practical educational

These ideological motives that were linked to social justice and led the teacher to choose the profession midway through life became stronger and more established during their clinical experience in disadvantaged schools. When the research participants were asked to identify educational research issues in the field of pedagogy, they directed their attention towards exposing and identifying educational injustices in a social context. The pre-service teacher, Tal, noticed that the selection mechanisms at the school where she did her clinical experience sorted students according to their math level: “*The separation makes students feel ‘weaker’ and to make less effort to advance to the next level.”* The injustice of unfair allocation of resources also results in an unjust policy of resource allocation for individual lessons at school:

*Many hours are invested in individual lessons during study hours…at school, rooms were built specifically for individual lessons. It is unclear how decisions are made regarding who gets individual lessons and with what frequency.*

Pre-service teachers expressed discontent toward situations where teaching was ineffective as a result of a teacher’s lack of sensitivity to cultural and linguistic differences in class, (e.g., in classroom settings where some students have a language other than Hebrew as their native language). Pre-service teachers in this study, who gained clinical experience in schools with a high nurturing measure (where students from disadvantaged populations such as low socio-economic status or migrant children study) focused their attention on the emotional, functional, and social difficulties of the students. This reawakened their sense of social mission to contribute to society and their desire to translate it into their daily practices at work*.* For example, Dor related:

*I spent a lot of time with low-level groups and there is something in the perceptions of teachers who work with them, something that outrages me because they expect so little of them…when you expect more, this allows students to grow and when you expect little from them, you leave them in this low place, and in fact thwart many future possibilities.*

Pre-service teachers demonstrated critical observation abilities and critical pedagogy views, criticizing the current modus operandi of the education system. They challenged educational decisions (whether consciously or subconsciously) with regard to streaming students, curricula, teachers’ use of language, resource allocation and relationships.

## Dimension W – Willingness – to examine and apply practices of social correction

During their research on clinical experience, the pre-service teachers demonstrated a strong willingness to investigate practices of social correction. This was expressed in their research topics and the questions they raised in their seminar papers. The desire to deepen their knowledge about customary school norms and practices, which, from their point of view, constituted social injustices, also included expressing overt defiance to school educational staff, through the questions they asked in interviews (as part of their research project in which they were asked to describe the educational issue that preoccupied them and which they believed required investigation). In the studies conducted using the action research method, the pre-service teachers developed pedagogical and educational strategies and practices to cope with what, in their opinion, constituted injustices occurring in the school. From their point of view, these were the educational challenges in need of change and they saw themselves as the agents responsible for implementing these changes. Action studies included intervention programs in which the aims of their change programs were detailed and translated into operational goals and ways of assessing their success.

The thematic analysis of intervention programs gave rise to the following five categories, all of which focus on pedagogic aspects connected to how they can operate at schools:

### (1) Practices linked with sorting and differentiation

Mechanisms that produce sorting and differentiation between students were discussed in the context of achieving equal opportunities and equality in results, emphasizing diversity as a condition for achieving social justice (McDonough & Feinberg, 2003). Among them, one could find practices of sorting into levels, where the main argument was the need to guarantee didactic congruence in teaching-learning processes (in other words, to match level, pace and method of teaching to a student’s ability, needs and interest in learning). Consistent with research findings in this field, the pre-service teacher Gili also argued that, in her view, sorting into levels for the purpose of narrowing gaps is not efficient and has a negative impact on students placed in low levels. According to the pre-service teacher Yael “*The class is divided into three groups. Hence math differentiates, I want to narrow gaps, so it seems to me that math is exactly a tool to narrow it.”*

Another mechanism to sort and differentiate is individual lessons, which Tal presented:

*As an observer from the sidelines I am interested in the considerations of individual lesson strategies. Who decides what and how students will learn in individual lessons? How do they decide the frequency of individual lessons?*

Tal, in fact, perceived individual hours as a resource allocated to chosen children, but she stated that she did not know on what grounds these students were selected and expressed her desire to explore the criteria. She feared that the resources were allocated unfairly and unprofessionally, prompting her to challenge the existing order.

###  (2) Practices linked to teaching and learning methods

Classroom teaching and learning methods are the ways teachers choose to fulfill their main role of encouraging learning. How this is put into practice is likely to benefit and advance learning in certain contexts while delaying it in others. The pre-service teacher, Hovav, spoke about a teacher who taught verbally, using the blackboard and exercises from the book or work pages she had prepared. He argued that this teaching style was ineffective. Hovav’s interpretation is that the teacher taught this way due to the teacher’s perception of students as having low abilities, requiring language and learning demands to be lowered: “*It is troubling because it is counterproductive. If the aim is to promote students’ understanding, then the actual result is that teachers simplify the language in which they teach.”* Hovav argued that teaching methods that combine visual teaching are appropriate for addressing the cultural diversity of the students and taking into account the language difficulties of some of the students, as doing so makes the information more accessible to them.

The pre-service teacher, Vered, wrote about the issue of assigning homework. Despite disagreements in the existing literature about the contribution of homework to learning, there is a consensus that homework is seen by many as increasing the gaps between children and different population levels because it contributes to differential learning (OECD, 2014). Therefore, in her opinion, “*Homework should not be assigned at all, because in any case, these students don’t have a suitable environment to do it or the direction needed and if some have the support needed to do their homework, it will increase the gaps between students.”*

She stressed the need to create equal conditions for students and her desire as a teacher to nurture her students during school time as her justification for the proposed change. In addition, student teachers proposed peer learning, including games in learning, and more. It appears that all the practices proposed challenge the existing traditional order and present relatively innovative pedagogies.

### (3) Practices linked to classroom climate and teacher-student relationships

Teachers play a central role in class management, including the ability to develop caring and supportive relationships with and among students. They also create and impose rules to optimize learning and promote the development of students’ social skills and self-regulation. Furthermore, they employ methods encouraging learners to participate in assignments, using appropriate interventions if needed (Everstone & Weinstein, 2006). The PSTs particularly emphasized the aspect of their relationships with students for the purpose of establishing a positive classroom environment which focuses on the students’ emotional and social well-being. Mirit presented the importance of atmosphere while seeking to personally overcome a difficult experience she had at school, which she wanted to prevent other students from experiencing:

*A student had good grades but was not very social at school. Since he had good grades, we did not intervene, but now this social problem will affect him for the rest of his life. … They shunned me a few times at school and I know why. I know what it is like when a teacher has to intervene-- it is the teacher’s role.*

The need to establish an atmosphere of safety at school and in the classroom was mentioned often by PST researchers. Among others, they described their duty as that of protective parents to prevent any additional pain that the students may be experiencing at home. They devoted a lot of time to establishing personal connections with their students, by engaging in conversations, and providing emotional support. Furthermore, they dedicated a lot of time in disciplinary lessons to moral discussions about friendship, fairness, mutual support among classmates, and, in certain circumstances, even asked for professional intervention.

### (4) Practices linked to assessing students’ achievements

Assessing students’ achievements is a central part of a teacher’s job. Although there are various means of assessment, the most common is grades. Young PSTs are very aware, from their experience as students themselves, that assigning grades has an effect not just on sorting students in the short- and long-term, but also has an impact on their self-esteem and motivation to study. Finally, grades affect students’ social status in class. As a result, PSTs asked to learn how to assess achievements based more on meritocratic rules emphasizing the principle of fairness of input rather than of output, such as studenthood. In pre-service teacher Renana’s opinion:

*As the level of student achievement is lower than in other schools, one should emphasize achievement less and put more significant weight on behavior and participation… A student in fact must prove that he is a diligent student, by arriving to lessons on time and prepared, listens to the teacher, completes his assignments, develops the ability to learn independently, and takes responsibility for his learning. In my opinion, that is “studenthood.”*

### (5) Practices linked with learning environment arrangement

Learning environment arrangements have a direct and reciprocal effect on all aspects of teaching and learning in class, from class atmosphere to teaching method. The pre-service teacher Doron carried out his seminar work as action research and said:

*At the school where I teach, homework reduces students’ sense of self-efficacy. One day Philipos (student) was lying on his table in a lesson. When I asked how I could help him, he explained that he didn't have a pen. The minute I offered him a pen, he, with exceptional speed, solved all the exercises the teacher had put on the blackboard and quickly finished his homework. He has a talent for math, but he is not considered one of the good students. It appears that he needs a slightly different learning environment, one in which he can study and do homework. I will try and create a comfortable and enjoyable study space in the school library (where students stay late), where they can study math.*

# Conclusions

The educational practices the PSTs proposed to explore and apply in their work experience classes (as shown in Table 3 below) refer to the categories and aspects that PSTs encounter operationally and independently in the focused classroom context.

The findings reveal that the foundations of teachers working to nurture social justice practices at schools are underpinned by three dimensions: (a) ideology-value dimension – this group of ideological motives is also acknowledged in the existing literature as the main reason pre-service teachers chose teaching as a second career (Chambers, 2002). The findings of this study further supports this; (b) the ability to critically observe reality by identifying mechanisms and social injustices in education. Freire (2005) argued that this ability is the product of “critical awareness” as opposed to” naïve awareness.” Those with critical awareness are aware of the social and cultural context of a situation, as well as their own place in this context and the tension between social justice and the existing situation (Freire & Shor, 1990; Landreman et al., 2015); and (c) willingness dimension – to create change through their desire to explore, challenge, and diverge from traditional practices in favor of implementing new practices for social correction in class. These three dimensions correspond with Dyches and Boyd’s (2017) SJPACK model, suggesting that Social Justice Knowledge integrates teachers’ pedagogical and content knowledges.

This same unique knowledge is also established and strengthened during the training process. This finding is also supported by other studies. Programs whose course work, field experiences, and supervision are centered on socially-just teaching are more effective than more fragmented programs (Athanases & Oliveira, 2008; Boyed & Noblit, 2015; Freedman & Appleman, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2001; McDonald, 2007; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010; Tigchelaar, Vermunt & Brouwer, 2011). Therefore, the type of school in which PSTs acquire their experience and in which they are qualified to teach, plays a crucial role in structuring and establishing their professional identity.

Philpott and Dagenais (2012) explored how teaching conditions play an important role in determining the ability of novice teachers to work toward fairness in education. They demonstrated how the school atmosphere, challenges in the curricula, and pressures to adapt, create a wide and complex range of challenges for new teachers. However, despite these challenges, they maintained that without any link to teaching conditions, personal motivations and experiences led them to strive for social justice. Similarly, the findings here are especially interesting in light of PSTs’ limited field of operation and despite their relatively low status as pre-service teachers without formal qualifications. Based on the above, it can be said that these pre-service teachers displayed courage to oppose accepted norms at school, to ask educational staff difficult questions, and to openly oppose existing practices in order to instigate change. The findings of this study correspond with those of Picower (2011), who maintained that social justice-oriented teachers developed four different strategies to promote social justice. Namely, they supported each other in a research community that protected their vision, hid their critical pedagogy by integrating it into the legitimate curriculum, educated their students to think as change agents, and publicly opposed policies inconsistent with students’ best interests. Therefore, according to our findings, the ability to critically observe and the desire to instigate change are likely to produce a future generation of revolutionary teachers enacting social change. The three aforementioned dimensions maintain their vision and ability to be social justice-oriented teachers.

Critical observation of practices proposed by PSTs reveals that what does not exist also demands attention. Comparison to existing literature in this area shows that most practices deal with the basic actions performed by teachers in the classroom. Such actions are generally concrete and congruent with the development processes of new teachers. An example of this can be seen in Bondy et al. (2012) which analyzed the practices of first year teachers in the context of the quality “warm demanders” and demonstrated how their commitment to improve the lives of Americans of African origin translates into fostering the knowledge and life skills necessary to be responsible citizens. In this study too, young teachers mostly addressed the logistic, organizational, technical, allocative, and emotional area, paying less attention to critical pedagogy that calls for liberal education (Freire, 2000). For example, there is no reference to existing contents in the curriculum as latent messages passed on to learners from top to bottom or to the application of dialogic and investigative approaches to structuring knowledge, disregarding the fact that PSTs’ are new to the profession. Nonetheless, as they are at the beginning of their journey as teachers, one should hope that their professional development and acquisition of additional professional experience will help to further cultivate their critical awareness.

# Implications for teacher education

Mapping the challenges and practices that emerged in the research projects of second career PSTs indicate that schools are arenas of social justice in which varied and valuable educational resources are allocated. PSTs’ motives for choosing the profession, their views of their role in general and of justice in particular, play a key role in how they apply principles of justice. Therefore, this should be considered during training. It is important to place PSTs in practical experience frameworks encouraging observation of complex social situations (Boyed & Noblit, 2015; Whipp, 2013). Furthermore, the PSTs describe research topics and questions stemming from their desire to understand how to maximize the social and learning circumstances of school children, inter alia, due to their wide selection of research topics. There is a pressing need to accompany PSTs in explicitly developing awareness and practices through which teachers can carry out corrective measures in the classroom (some of which were described above). There is a further need to create a curriculum for out-of-class experiences that challenge learners to resist oppression beyond school walls (Freire, 2000; Freire, Freire & de Oliveira, 2014). In addition, the partnership between training institutions and schools must allow and encourage change, for example, by giving PSTs greater autonomy in curriculum preparation and classroom management and allowing the use of social justice networks to recruit prospective teachers. This would also aid existing teacher candidates in forming networks, which, as demonstrated by Ritchie (2012), will likely strengthen the implementation of social justice in the classroom. In light of this, it would be worthwhile to track these PSTs graduates in longitudinal studies.

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