

Teachers' Social Justice Attitudes and Behaviors in Challenging Contexts: A Case Study

Actitudes y comportamientos de justicia social del profesorado en contextos desafiantes. Estudio de caso

 Irene Moreno-Medina | Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, España

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Abstract

This research seeks to determine the attitudes and behaviors of teachers from schools in challenging contexts and understand how some become socially just teachers. A case study approach was used in five schools: three public schools and one privately run but state-funded school in Spain and one public school in Portugal, with a sample made up of teaching and non-teaching staff from the schools. Document analysis, non-participant observation, and semi-structured interviews uncovered two types of teacher profile—one committed to education and social justice, and the other exhausted and unmotivated—and provided insight into the practices, motivations, and leadership of teachers working toward social justice. Thus, the study shows a clear need for targeted social justice training and increased awareness of inequalities.

Keywords: teacher education, disadvantaged school, educational priority zone, social justice

Resumen

Esta investigación busca conocer las actitudes y comportamientos del profesorado de escuelas situadas en contextos desafiantes y comprender cómo algunos de ellos se convierten en docentes socialmente justos. Se utilizó el enfoque metodológico de estudios de caso en cinco centros educativos: tres públicos y uno privado-concertado, de España, y uno público, de Portugal, con una muestra conformada por el personal docente y no docente de las escuelas. El análisis de documentos, la observación no participante y la información recabada en entrevistas semiestructuradas permitieron identificar dos perfiles docentes (uno comprometido con la educación y la justicia social; y otro agotado y desmotivado), y conocer las prácticas, motivaciones y liderazgo de docentes que trabajan por la justicia social. Se evidencia, así, la necesidad de una formación específica en justicia social y sensibilización ante las desigualdades.

Palabras clave: formación de docentes, escuela desfavorecida, zona de prioridad educativa, justicia social



I. Introduction

As a teacher, being committed to social justice is no simple task. It calls for specific training and awareness to understand social injustices and learn how to work to change them. This is why there has been increased demand in recent years for research on educational practice with a focus on teaching and learning about diversity or more socially-oriented issues in teacher training (Hambacher & Ginn, 2020; Truscott & Obiwo, 2021), together with research on professional teacher training and educational practice for social justice (Dover et al., 2020).

Socially just teachers are agents of change who are highly committed to building a fair and democratic society, for which they need to be trained to think critically, understand different cultures and perspectives, and work on their own prejudices (Cochran-Smith, 2020). Professional teacher training is a basic pillar in the development of educators committed to social justice. This view has been put forward by numerous authors in recent years, backed by research (Albalá et al., 2021; Goodwin & Darity, 2019; Spitzman & Balconi, 2019). Goodwin and Darity (2019) analyzed initial teacher training programs and highlighted a need to include conceptualizations of what is meant by educational equity and social justice. In a quantitative study to determine teacher attitudes toward social justice and inclusion, Albalá et al. (2021) report that teachers differ in their attitudes based on their beliefs about justice. This is why they argue that to achieve more just educational contexts, it is important for teachers to work on inclusion and justice. In response to this formative need, Spitzman and Balconi (2019) suggest that teaching staff should establish connections with students' culture – that is, work to create connections that are based on intercultural practices and bear a relationship to young people's linguistic needs and backgrounds.

There is evidence of a positive impact on students when school leaders and teachers work to achieve social justice. This is described in a review by Hunt and Seiver (2018) and Shaked (2019). Shaked also notes that despite understanding this impact, there are limitations in the way teachers can be trained in education for social justice. For a school to become committed to social justice, teachers must be offered a learning process in this respect, and it is essential to discuss the issue and promote democratic learning among teachers (Butin, 2015; Burns & Miller, 2017). Butin argues there is a need to engage in preliminary work with teachers that supports later work in the classroom, so it is crucial that training also covers democratic and educational processes.

This learning process for educators is complex because there is no common framework for social justice training. Moreover, it is not even a regulated, basic component of teacher training; rather, it is received only after teachers become qualified. This is why students who are going into teaching should receive an education that is oriented toward social justice and formally recognized, because this also needs to be done officially (Kohli et al., 2015). If professional teacher training in education for social justice were given official status, this would also help to secure the sociopolitical recognition that an issue of this nature demands. In addition, given the way in which future teachers are currently trained, this would require improvements in skills and content. Inevitably, training of this nature must not be merely an optional specialization but instead should be a permanent feature of teacher education, such that it may also benefit those who do not adopt an approach grounded in education about oppression (Francis et al., 2017; Francis & Le Roux, 2011).

Social justice is a complex concept that includes various dimensions. Murillo and Hernández (2011) view social justice as a three-dimensional concept, encompassing (re)distribution, recognition, and representation: 1) the concept of social justice as (re)distribution (Nussbaum, 2006; Rawls, 1971) is based on the sharing or distribution of goods, which include both



material resources and cultural resources or capabilities; 2) social justice as recognition (Collins, 1991; Fraser, 2008; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) refers to respect for and recognition of all cultures; and 3) social justice as representation (Fraser, 2008; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Miller, 1999; Young, 2000) means ensuring all individuals are afforded the opportunity to actively engage in decision-making within the social sphere. Cuenca (2012) argues that the concept of social justice cannot be viewed without any one of these pillars, and in addition, Carneros et al. (2018) note that the idea of social justice cannot be conceived of without environmental justice, because these two political struggles are interlinked.

This means that teacher training for social justice should include different approaches to properly encompass all the pillars of education for social justice. According to Kelly-Jackson (2015), training courses for future teachers should have a focus on understanding power relations and exclusion – and hence, inclusion – in teaching with a culturally responsive, gender, and educational democracy perspective. In this regard, Ebersole et al. (2016) provide an interesting perspective by employing the term *sensitive teaching* for teachers, a concept that is closely tied to social justice. They suggest that after training, there is a need for a commitment by teachers to collect information on their students' backgrounds in order to make decisions that are fair to them.

Research by Lee (2011) confirms that teacher training should cover the principles of social justice both for novice and more experienced teachers, in order to preserve knowledge and acquired sensitivity. Frederick et al. (2010) report that teacher training with education programs for social justice has already made positive differences. Another study in the United States found positive effects on the mental health of educators who shared their stories of resilience in the face of inequality challenges in schools (Farnsworth, 2021). These educational practices also increase teachers' self-awareness and those who have been immersed in social justice training experiences have found them to be positive (Bali et al., 2020).

The social justice focus of teaching practice should be clear. This explains why DiAngelo and Sensoy (2019) also place importance on educators' self-awareness and awareness of privileged and oppressed groups. Self-awareness allows teachers to understand their position in society. DiAngelo and Sensoy seek to acknowledge teachers' place as a majority group and work with minority groups from an appropriate perspective. In addition to theoretical training, they believe it is essential that teachers are able to learn from their own experiences.

Ultimately, teachers for social justice need to be responsible professionals capable of educational change, with targeted social justice training, and reflective, critical individuals with a concern for inclusive education (Pantic & Florian, 2015). Indeed, Pantic and Florian explain that teacher-centered social justice training requires a commitment to social justice, to inclusion, and to understanding the collective nature of education and other stakeholders, as well as flexibility. In addition to being agents of education, teachers must also be activists (Navarro, 2018). Westheimer (2020) also defends the idea of the activist teacher, attaching special importance to promoting participation in social life across all possible spheres, which students are encouraged to develop with a particular focus on justice. It is teachers who are able to break down barriers to learning and participation and promote opportunities for student success (Jiménez et al., 2017).

According to Murillo and Hidalgo (2018), one necessary characteristic of teachers, particularly in challenging socioeconomic contexts, is that they should have trust in their students' capacity to learn and take ownership of their achievements (Murillo, 2021). Furthermore, the role played by educational leaders in social justice practices in schools is crucial, as this strengthens the relationship with the community: they are able to engage families more, get



along with local social and educational agents, and understand the education needs of their students, particularly those who need the most attention (Hernández-Castilla et al., 2013).

Mindful of this reality, this research aims to understand the attitudes and behaviors of teachers working in schools in challenging contexts and how they become socially just teachers.

II. Method

Given the qualitative nature of the research, it was decided to follow a case study approach, which is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The following eligibility criteria were used to select schools in challenging contexts: i) the school must provide (at a minimum) the early childhood and primary stages of education; ii) the school must be located in districts with a high unemployment rate and low per capita income; iii) students enrolled at the school must live in the same district as the school. These criteria did not consider other factors, such as the school's size or whether it was public or private.

Ultimately, five primary schools were selected, four of which are located in various districts of the capital city of Madrid (Spain) and one in Porto (Portugal). All are public schools except for one in Madrid, which is privately run but receives state funding (*concertado*).

The fieldwork was guided by the a priori categories of analysis shown in Table 1.

Table 1. A priori categories

Category	Description	Subcategories
Teacher attitudes and behavior	Understand the frame of mind displayed by teachers, their behaviors, and their relationship with equity and justice. Understand the state of motivation, who is truly motivated, and for what reasons. Understand if there is a sense of social responsibility due to the context they find themselves in or the population they work with.	Motivation. Promoting a good or poor working atmosphere. Sense of responsibility. Emotional burden. Sense of equity and justice.
Teaching practices	Gain deeper insight into the methodologies used by teachers, the rationale behind them, and how teachers adapt their work to their students' context. Also understand the school's lines of work and those of its internal working groups, and any collaborative projects in the school itself or with external agents. Understand which teachers have some kind of training, whether this training is offered by the school itself or by a different institution, and whether this training is included in their teaching practice and bears any relationship to the school's context.	Methodologies used. Teacher training. Lines of work. Collaborative projects. Adaptation to context.
Relationship between teachers and the rest of the educational community	Understand the type of relationship that exists between members of the educational community, whether there is teamwork and who the members of these teams are. Understand how teachers and administrative staff interact with families and the sociocultural or educational	Type of relationship between teachers. Teamwork. Type of leadership by administrative staff and teachers. Relationship with families.



Category	Description	Subcategories
	organizations in the school's immediate environment. Understand which teachers are involved in this relationship, and the reasons for this relationship. Understand whether there is a specific space for this purpose, which members of the community accept this relationship, and whether they belong to a regulated institution or are an independent group.	Type of collaboration with local associations.

There were 34 participants in all, including members of administrative staff and teaching and non-teaching staff (social educators, social workers, nursing staff, and educational advisors). This last group varied by school as it was dependent on the characteristics of each school and its staff, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Study participants

Participating schools	CEIP Nororma	CEIP Axarquía	Colegio Guadalteba	CEIP Los Guadalhorce	TEIP Costa del Sol
Administrative staff members	1	3	1	1	1
Teachers	4	3	1	8	2
Non-teaching staff	1	2	2	-	4

Note: CEIP = early childhood and primary school; TEIP = priority intervention educational area.

To collect data, the schools' key institutional documents were reviewed, non-participant observation was used, and semistructured and informal, open interviews were conducted.

The most relevant institutional documents were reviewed for each school, including a) the school's educational project; b) the school's coexistence plan and/or reports; c) plans and projects, currently in effect and completed; d) the school's website and class and project-specific blogs; e) where applicable, the parent association or family association's blog; and f) the internal working documents provided by schools.

A field journal was used for non-participant observation: the researcher spent the entire school day at each school with the various participants. The participants under observation consented to all the visits, which were arranged in accordance with the schools' needs and schedules. The journal was used primarily to gather observations of situations associated with the research objective – that is, incidents that occurred in different places and involving different participants, without the researcher intervening in any of the situations or interacting with the school community.

For the semistructured interviews, a guide was prepared with the core themes of the study, based on the established a priori categories. The original guide included 30 central questions, although not all of these questions were asked directly because some were addressed by interviewees in the course of answering other questions. In addition to questions directly relating to the topics of study, some introductory and closing questions were included.

The interviews were adapted based on participants' responses and further inquiries were made when answers were brief to delve deeper into essential issues (all while building rapport and in a non-invasive manner). The participants chose the time, date, and place of the interviews, which took between 60 and 90 minutes.



The fieldwork comprised the following stages: 1) initial contact was made with the schools to inform them of the research objective by telephone and e-mail; 2) an initial in-person meeting was held with the administrative staff to answer any questions; 3) the research fieldwork was approved by the teachers' council after both teaching and non-teaching staff were informed of the research; and 4) interviews began after participants voluntarily gave their consent. The key institutional documents were reviewed following initial interviews with administrative staff.

The process of data collection through interviews concluded when saturation was reached – that is, when no more information relevant to the research objective was being obtained. The duration of data collection was different for each school, depending on the research needs: one month for CEIP Axarquía, Colegio Guadalteba, and TEIP Costa del Sol, and two months for CEIP Nororma and CEIP Guadalhorce, respecting the time and space needs of each school community.

After the data had been collected and transcribed, the Atlas.ti software was used for labeling in order to begin the analysis. The data was analyzed by school. For triangulation, once the field work and data analysis were finished, each school was provided a report with the results (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Phases of research



Translation:

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
In-depth reading of all interviews	Selection of most relevant quotations	Labeling and coding	Grouping of codes into families	Construction of a coding tree	Final analysis

The research process followed the ethical principles for research with human participants outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki, as well as the guidelines of the Research Ethics Committee of the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). The names of the voluntary participants are not shown and the names of the schools are fictitious, as data confidentiality was assured.

III. Results

In line with the research objectives, the results are presented below in three blocks: teacher attitudes and behaviors, educational practices, and relations between members of the school community.

3.1 Attitudes and behaviors of teachers from schools in challenging contexts

The emotional state of teachers working in socioeconomically challenging contexts is complex and varied. For teachers, this has brought about a transformation in their work and in their own inner state, resulting in two teacher profiles distinguishable across all schools: one motivated and committed to education, change, community, and social justice; and the other, exhausted and unmotivated.



One important factor affecting teachers and the way they engage in schools is the existence of conflicts that make their way into the classroom and manifest themselves through violence. Despite a notable group of teachers who do work for social justice, others are observed to lack adequate strategies to work in these contexts. This is reflected in the testimonies:

There are difficult days – many, many of them. I've cried, I've come out of here crying many times. (CEIP Axarquía, teacher 3, 9:9)

It's very tough emotionally. (CEIP Nororma, teacher 2, 7:3)

These levels of engagement are not without consequences. Indeed, teachers' work leads them to adopt professional roles not directly associated with formal education – in other words, teachers often take on social roles. Those who are unable to develop this level of engagement or learn how to respond to the difficulties that arise in these challenging contexts do not stay at the school. This is clearly shown in the following comments by school staff:

Engagement by teachers here is... either you have it or... it really burns you out. We've had people who haven't lasted very long at all here. (Colegio Guadalteba, social educator, 2:3)

We've had people who couldn't cope and requested a transfer. It depends on the kind of person you are, your expectations... we're more like social workers than teachers here. (CEIP Guadalhorce, director of studies [*jefa de estudios*], 1:11)

And while this does result in high teacher turnover, with many teachers requesting a transfer or leaving the school, there are some teachers who are highly committed to social justice and remain at the school. Particularly noteworthy is the sense of responsibility of the staff working in the schools and their involvement with the local and school community. One non-teaching staff member summarized this as follows:

Working with these children is tough. It's exhausting and it's non-stop. But if the context of this school were different, our role would have no meaning. (TEIP Costa del Sol, social worker, 1:21).

Teachers become involved and may address these needs by providing short-term support, although their ultimate objective is to bring about lasting change rooted in justice and equity:

That's what I liked about the school: they were consistent, they thought about what they were doing. [...] These people, the teachers, live in the environment, sleep in the environment, see everything that's in the environment, and want to change it. (Colegio Guadalteba, social educator, 2:17)

We work with our students in a way that is just, allowing individuality within diversity. We're building an inclusive school, where equality means justice. We look out for individual differences to promote joint action. (TEIP Costa del Sol, psychologist, 6:2)

3.2 Teaching practices

Various teaching practices adapt to needs that arise in the schools as a result of the challenging environment. In the case of CEIP Axarquía, the administrative staff reported that when they adopted a new strategy based in particular on active methodologies, they found that some teachers were not able to "follow" that method. There was a clear need for change in the schools, and for this change to be reflected in the school's institutional project so that everybody was on the same page and it was not simply an activity confined to the classroom.



This commitment requires a high level of responsibility and learning geared toward the school's context. A number of teachers did not feel capable because this demanded significant physical and psychological effort. These were the words of the principal:

The way we work is not convenient because we don't work with books. We work with active methodologies. The classes require a lot of preparation and coordination, and there are teachers who don't like working that way. [...] You have to be able to improvise, be very resourceful... and some people aren't like that. Others leave because they're not up to the challenge posed by our children. They say, "It's causing me so much stress I can't stand it." (CEIP Axarquía, principal, 4:8)

This job demands knowledge of the context, its characteristics, and the way things work. But that is not all: training is needed to respond to students' needs. In general, these schools also devote a lot of time both to projects that help to improve the school and local area and to training seminars.

The other teachers and I have all organized a seminar to develop the school's institutional project, and develop it better. (CEIP Axarquía, teacher 4, 6:1)

We are very motivated, deeply committed to our vocation, but also very tired. Very tired. In recent years we've made a huge effort with training and that takes a toll. [...] If it wasn't their calling, they wouldn't be here. In fact, we've had teachers who have left, who couldn't bear it in the end. (Colegio Guadalteba, principal, 3:7)

The administrative staff at each school are always trying to provide support, especially to new teachers, to help them understand what is going on around them and adapt the way they work to their students' needs. Likewise, these educational leaders promote teamwork and seek out helpful strategies that can be implemented in the realities they face.

The principal is involved not only in matters that concern the children and their education, but also in other aspects of life. (CEIP Axarquía, teacher 1, 2:28)

Teachers who hold administrative positions are also responsible for other tasks. For example, the principal of CEIP Guadalhorce is the point of contact for families and there are no parent meetings with each class teacher. Whenever a problem arises, parents turn to her and not the class tutors, who have not forged a strong enough bond for families to come to them instead of the administrative staff. These parent meetings are in addition to their existing duties. Another factor adds to the workload in the secretary's office: some families' reading and writing skills are so poor they need help with paperwork.

We try to act as mediators between families and teachers, so that class tutors understand why the children are the way they are. We try to coordinate it all so everyone can work well. (CEIP Guadalhorce, director of studies, 1:12)

We don't shut ourselves away in the office, no. We find out what goes on in the classroom and with our colleagues [...]. During school hours, you're going back and forth all day long, stuff goes on in class, they come here feeling sick. We do the administrative work after school hours. This isn't the kind of school where the administrative staff can stay out of the dynamics of the school's day-to-day life. (CEIP Guadalhorce, director of studies, 1:15)

The financial hardship faced by students' families in purchasing school supplies and clothing is another common situation in these five schools. The problem is that these families cannot



afford the workbooks, exercise books, pencils, or specific items required for certain subjects, such as a recorder and manuscript notebook for music:

I can't, in good conscience, have a child sitting there idle. So I give them other sheets I make myself. (CEIP Nororma, teacher 2, 7:2)

Teachers and administrative staff have facilitated collaboration with other organizations to solve this problem, or requested some kind of financial aid to address the situation. Not having school equipment makes it impossible for teachers to plan, so in response, they have had to find alternatives, distinct from those of official education authorities, and cleverly design activities that allow children to acquire the skills even when they do not all have access to the same resources.

In addition, there is another kind of problem that was not described in the research as it did not occur at all times. Rather, these were unforeseen incidents that happened on a day-to-day basis and required, to varying degrees, urgent action. The ability to improvise good practices that help to resolve these situations is one of the teams' major strengths, but it is also exhausting and can disrupt the day's schedule at any time, requiring them to frequently adjust to respond to the needs of their environment.

You have to be very attuned to the problems of the population or you'll be hard-pressed to do your job. Academics are secondary here, grades are not important. When we give an assessment, we say that, we don't talk about grades. We work from the premise that it's impossible; the kids need a normal environment to perform well academically (Colegio Guadalteba, social educator, 2:8)

3.3 Relations between members of the educational community

In some cases, teachers differ in their methodologies or in their understanding of their context, but there is a close bond and a high level of collaboration between them. Collaboration is essential in these schools to bring about any kind of change or improvement that impacts students, families, and the neighborhood. The close connection between staff in the schools, especially during the most difficult times, is clear in some of the testimonies:

I was a victim of attempted assault when I started out here, and let's say the support was absolute. Despite differences in methods, when something happens, people bend over backwards for you. And for me, that's the most important thing. (CEIP Guadalhorce, teacher 4, 4:7)

There's a good relationship between teachers. If they ask for a little help, "Hey, what's this here?" I think they help each other out quite a lot. "Hey, I need some help for this," "Hey, I've thought about what we can do..." and in that sense, yes, I think they support one another. (CEIP Nororma, nurse, 4:12)

The teachers in these schools are subject to a high emotional burden and additional workload to meet the minimum requirements of the curriculum and offer some sort of progress to the children, families, and neighborhoods. But all this is achieved without receiving any real support. The job can prove too challenging and some are unable to tolerate it. Teachers who lack a sense of social commitment and engagement are unable to cope with the situations they encounter on a day-to-day basis in the schools. Once teachers understand that the dynamics of the school are not like those of other schools in more advantaged areas, they comprehend the magnitude of the task at hand. The administrative staff provides guidance and support to new teachers or those without experience in this kind of environment:



I had no idea what these children were like. I tried doing some research online, looking up things to do with their culture. And what I found wasn't the sense I got from them in the classroom, either. (CEIP Guadalhorce, teacher 2, 2:1)

We try to act as mediators between families and teachers, so that class tutors understand why the children are the way they are. We try to coordinate it all so everyone can work well. (CEIP Guadalhorce, director of studies, 1:12)

Strong professional and personal qualities, rooted in a sense of social commitment, are needed. The nature of the environment demands collaboration:

A strong humanitarian approach, working very much within a network and for the benefit of students. We try to create strategies and overcome difficulties, building constant bridges with families, involving ourselves in the education process. (TEIP Costa del Sol, teacher 2, 4:1)

People know that they're investing their time, they're not going to get it back. They do get very involved; they know the environment they're working with. We have people who are very highly qualified, who have very good CVs, and they could have gone and worked in other schools [...] But you get hooked here. It's captivating and once you're here, you don't want to leave. (Colegio Guadalteba, social educator, 2:19)

Members of teaching staff gradually feel more and more burned out and sometimes lose motivation due to an overload of responsibilities, required paperwork, and accumulated fatigue. They feel that to improve student inclusion, they need more assistants involved in providing support:

These are challenging environments, they're hard work. These are children who've been marginalized by the education system. [...] I've noticed a resistance to change. Resistance because the work they do is grueling. It's a daily struggle and there are teachers with accumulated fatigue. (TEIP Costa del Sol, educational advisor, 7:22)

Yes, I do prepare the lessons. I'm a teacher and I have some know-how, but in the eight years I've been a secretary, I've realized I've lost touch with teaching because I'm always turning things over in my mind. You're like that all day – and I also get involved a lot in things I shouldn't. (CEIP Nororma, secretary, 9:8).

The relationships forged by teachers and administrative staff do not end at the school. They stretch beyond the school premises, establishing connections with the local area. This is demonstrated by the schools' ongoing efforts with families and the surrounding community:

The school plays an active role in the local area and strives for equity and social justice. (TEIP Costa del Sol, principal, 5:7)

We're like a family. We know the families, we know who are brothers and sisters and how to treat families. (CEIP Guadalhorce, director of studies, 1:3)

IV. Discussion and conclusions

In the course of this research, it became clear that there are two main groups of teachers who are affected differently by the context surrounding these schools. On the one hand are teachers who are strongly committed to education for social justice: teachers who are mindful of the context in which the school operates and endeavor to understand how this affects the lives of their students and their students' families. Indeed, in this sense, Larson et al. (2018) and Sleeter (2018) note that teachers with greater awareness of cultural diversity have better



educational strategies. On the other hand are teachers who work from a deficit perspective because they are unaware of the specific characteristics of the context (Amatea et al., 2012) and do not know how to work with students from challenging backgrounds.

This study found that to achieve just evaluation practices, recognizing the heterogeneous nature of students and their families is a key factor in ensuring teachers are able to commit themselves (Murillo & Hidalgo, 2018): recognition is a pillar of education for social justice. The objective is to minimize the negative impact of the students' environment and not let it disrupt the way the school operates. In addition to working for social justice, there are teachers who are educators and activists (Cochran-Smith, 2020).

The administrative staff in these schools is made up of professionals with teaching experience. This has allowed them to immerse themselves more fully in the realities of the schools and the surrounding environment, and develop an institutional plan that is better aligned with their students' needs. In this regard, Clarke and O'Donoghue (2021) maintain that good leadership in education is achieved when there are efforts to bring about social change and eliminate injustices. This suggests that administrative staff members, who are also teachers, have been demonstrating good leadership through the praxis of social justice.

One key strength of this research is that access was gained to different schools located in socioeconomically challenging contexts, where the teachers (or at least, a group of teachers) worked towards education for social justice. In addition, this work provided a voice to teachers and other socioeducational professionals and showed the reality faced by these schools. At the same time, there are also limitations: the case study approach makes it impossible to generalize these results, and bias may have been introduced by the interviewees themselves.

This research raises new questions. It could be complemented by a quantitative study that would make it possible to generalize the findings and gain deeper insight into the factors that support success in teachers working from a social justice approach. A more complex line of inquiry, which would require a longitudinal approach, would measure the impact that teaching with a social justice perspective has on students' lives.

In short, teachers working with a social justice approach require both targeted training and an awareness of inequalities. Educators who also have the opportunity and ability to be social justice leaders in schools will have the power to reach well beyond what is typically possible in classrooms. Enabling teachers to give their students a voice and transform their experiences into instruments that empower and transform their immediate environment is one way to begin this task when no other resources are available.

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