

Justicia social en la formación del profesorado: revisión sistemática de intervenciones pedagógicas

Social Justice in Teacher Education: A Systematic Review of Pedagogical Interventions

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Abstract

Social justice refers to civic education aimed at building a socially fair, equitable, and diversely respectful society. University-level teacher education can foster a learning process focused on equity and respect, making this approach a key component of initial teacher preparation. Although numerous studies have sought to promote social equity in education, it remains necessary to systematically review this empirical evidence to determine its real impact. For this purpose, the present study analyzes how this approach is developed in teacher education through recent pedagogical interventions. A systematic review of pedagogical interventions was conducted using indexed journals and databases (WOS, Scopus, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ProQuest, Dialnet, Google Scholar, Sage Publishing, and Wiley Online Library) from the last five years, in accordance with the PRISMA methodology. The eligibility criteria included primary studies of pedagogical interventions written in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Catalan, or English, published between 2020 and 2025, with full-text access. A total of 17 studies were selected. The findings show a positive impact on knowledge, social and pedagogical practices, and attitudes toward education for social justice, indicating cognitive, attitudinal, and praxeological progress among preservice teachers. This effect appears to be linked to the use of practice-based teaching, an approach that includes observing effective practices, applying studied strategies to authentic pedagogical situations, and engaging in analysis and reflection on one's own and others' practice. Overall, the results suggest that the success of education for social equity depends on the quality of initial and continuing teacher training, flexible curriculum design, the contextual adaptation of teaching strategies, and access to specialized support services.

Keywords: social justice, teaching, student, teacher, teacher education, pedagogical practice.

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Introduction

Social justice refers to the construction of society according to the principles of equality, equity, recognition of diversity, and inclusion. It involves eliminating oppression that arises when differences are classified and hierarchized—that is, when certain social groups unequally receive power, social and economic advantages, as well as institutional and cultural legitimacy according to their position within such hierarchies (Bell, 2016).

Social justice is a principle aimed at ensuring genuine equality of rights and opportunities for all people, regardless of their social, cultural, or economic differences. It proposes that every individual should develop their potential, live with dignity, overcome inequalities, and overcome barriers that limit access to fundamental rights. Likewise, it promotes equity, as it implies adapting conditions to different realities and needs in order to achieve fair and equitable participation (Pijanowski & Brady, 2020).

In this sense, social justice is a broad construct encompassing the realization of the previously described principles in order to achieve the full development of individuals across different areas of life (Pijanowski & Brady, 2020). Moreover, it may be understood as an ideal in which the distribution of resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable, and where all members are physically and psychologically safe, recognized, and treated with respect (Bell, 2016). According to Musara et al. (2021), social justice includes, among other dimensions, inclusion and diversity as essential elements of respect for and enjoyment of human rights, since they eliminate barriers that restrict participation and promote non-discrimination.

Therefore, the understanding and practice of social justice cannot be separated from inclusion and respect for diversity (Bell, 2016). Any attempt to implement inclusive education must recognize that this also implies promoting and practicing a socially just society (Bell, 2016). Inclusion establishes that education should be provided to all students, regardless of any perceived social, cultural, or intellectual differences or disabilities. Consequently, it requires expanding conventional thinking, structures, and practices to ensure that all students are accommodated (Musara et al., 2021).

Inclusion encompasses the need for educational and social practices that support students who may experience disadvantage or exclusion due to a wide range of factors, including age, ability, gender, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, geographical location, and socioeconomic status (Musara et al., 2021). From this perspective, inclusion represents a principle for achieving social justice that may include disability, although it is not limited to this population.

Social justice is also grounded in diversity, that is, in the recognition and appreciation of differences as pillars of a democratic society, together with the rejection of any attempt at uniformity (Bell, 2016). Diversity refers to differences among social groups, such as ethnicity, social class, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and nationality, which are reflected in historical experiences, language, cultural practices, and traditions.

A concrete and authentic understanding of different groups, their histories, experiences, ways of constructing meaning, and values is fundamental to the goal of social justice based on recognition and respect (Bell, 2016).

Thus, diversity is conceived as the legitimate coexistence of multiple identities, whose respect must be recognized and guaranteed as a fundamental human right in all social and educational contexts. This perspective demands that differences should not perpetuate inequalities; instead, they should become equitable measures that favor historically marginalized groups.

Additionally, it promotes horizontal dialogue among bodies of knowledge and worldviews, while requiring profound transformations in policies, curricular content, and institutional practices so that diversity may have a genuine and structural impact on social and educational life (Bell, 2016).

Previous studies consistently indicate that social justice is a central issue in contemporary education. It is especially relevant for overcoming socioeconomic, racial, and cultural disparities that create, maintain, and reproduce educational inequalities (Hosseini et al., 2025; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021). Likewise, social justice seeks to develop citizens capable of living in and contributing to a just, equitable, and diversity-respecting society (Pijanowski & Brady, 2020).

To achieve this, it is necessary to interpret the problems affecting people from disadvantaged contexts as the result of unjust policies and systems, rather than as consequences of their individual condition (Hosseini et al., 2025). Consequently, favorable structural conditions may generate improved educational outcomes, whereas unfavorable conditions tend to limit them (Liao et al., 2022; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021).

Some studies indicate that incorporating social justice into formal teaching may produce significant improvements in education (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Keles & Munthe, 2025; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Ryan et al., 2022). However, teacher education oriented toward social justice has been questioned in several respects, particularly because its implementation often privileges discourse over practice and lacks structural foundations (Kavanagh, 2017; Vaillant, 2020).

Initial teacher education frequently focuses on technical content while neglecting critical reflection on structural inequalities (Paz-Maldonado, 2019). Although social justice forms part of institutional discourse, limitations persist in the operationalization of normative frameworks and pedagogical practices (Vaillant, 2020; Hernández & Flores, 2021).

Other studies indicate that teacher education is often reduced to distributive equity, without sufficient attention to other dimensions such as recognition and representation (Bell, 2016; Mendoza, 2022). Added to this is the limited preparation of teachers to work in diverse contexts; consequently, initial teacher education often fails to provide the necessary tools to respond to the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic heterogeneity of students (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Paterson, 2023).

The lack of teacher participation in curriculum design related to social justice and the persistent gap between initial and continuing teacher education have also been criticized (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Keles & Munthe, 2025; Liao et al., 2022).

These critiques require rethinking teacher education for social justice and incorporating a constructive, critical, intercultural, and transformative perspective capable of articulating theory, practice, and teachers' ethical commitment. Teaching in and for social justice requires structural educational changes (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Keles & Munthe, 2025; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Ryan et al., 2022).

Specifically, Bindhani and Gopinath (2024) and Ryan et al. (2022) recommend incorporating flexible curricular designs, professional development programs, and specialized teacher training and support mechanisms. Similarly, Gordillo and Prado (2024), Kitchen and Taylor (2020), Reagan and Hambacher (2021), and Ryan et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of teacher education in identifying and eliminating injustice embedded in formal educational practices and social structures, acting as agents of change, and providing fair, accessible, equitable, diverse, respectful, and high-quality educational opportunities for all without discrimination (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Keles & Munthe, 2025; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Ryan et al., 2022).

Furthermore, teachers should simultaneously be prepared in pedagogical and conceptual knowledge, as well as in pedagogical and technical competencies that promote teaching in and for social justice within their professional practice. In this regard, various educational approaches have been proposed.

For example, Cochran-Smith (2010, as cited in Reagan & Hambacher, 2021) highlights the importance of equal learning opportunities, respect for diversity, and preparing teachers for the realities of their educational contexts. For this approach to be effective, it is necessary to develop knowledge, interpretative frameworks, teaching strategies, and favorable attitudes toward the educational development of these principles of social justice.

Bondy et al. (2018), for their part, conceive social justice as a praxis integrated into broader democratic educational practices. These include listening to all voices, debate, and dissent. Within this framework, teachers and teacher educators must reflect on the transformation of unjust practices within their environments and recognize the systemic and institutional nature of injustice.

Therefore, transformation requires critically analyzing the historical and sociocultural roots of injustice; questioning unjust power relations in ways that support the socioemotional healing of all involved; promoting a comprehensive transformation of injustice not only through the exchange of academic knowledge but also through fostering students' intellectual and spiritual growth; and, finally, examining one's own actions while recognizing that knowledge constantly evolves and that justice is a way of life involving reflection, questioning, and action.

Consequently, teacher education for social justice should employ critical, comprehensive, and constructive pedagogical approaches that go beyond the mere transmission of information and instead develop both the attitude and competence necessary to confront injustice and foster critical reflection on educational practices while simultaneously providing quality education for all (Kitchen & Taylor, 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021).

The literature on teacher education for social justice includes studies on the impact of programs oriented toward this value on teachers' and teacher educators' attitudes and emotional engagement (Keles & Munthe, 2025; Kitchen & Taylor, 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021), as well as on observed changes in pedagogical practices (Keles & Munthe, 2025; Kitchen & Taylor, 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021).

In this regard, effective practices have been documented for strengthening teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and skills in order to implement teaching grounded in social justice principles, apply them across disciplines, and write critical autobiographies. However, unintended effects of teacher education programs have also been reported, such as lack of critical questioning, resistance to critical pedagogy, and tendencies to abandon the teaching profession (Keles & Munthe, 2025; Kitchen & Taylor, 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021).

The growing number of empirical studies on teacher education for social justice has encouraged the publication of several reviews in recent years, most of them in English. Hosseini et al. (2025) analyzed pedagogical interventions designed to train teachers in social justice, emphasizing teachers' responses to such practices, as well as their socioemotional understanding and experiences. Results indicated that these interventions improved teachers' critical awareness and sensitivity toward social issues.

Similarly, Kitchen and Taylor (2020) explored the design and implementation of programs for initial teacher education and determined that a key aspect involved integrating content that promotes critical reflection and commitment to equity from early stages, thereby supporting the preparation of teachers committed to social justice.

In another line of inquiry, Keles and Munthe (2025) synthesized evidence regarding pedagogical interventions against discrimination, racism, and prejudice, organized in diverse formats such as complete programs, courses, practica, lived experiences, and pedagogical approaches incorporating literature, film, media, and critical dialogue. Their review demonstrated that these strategies facilitate deep reflection and the transformation of discriminatory attitudes among teachers.

Hambacher and Ginn (2021) specifically addressed the visibility of race in teacher education between 2002 and 2018. They found that, although progress had been made in recognizing structural racism, limitations persist in how this perspective is integrated into teacher education. Likewise, Romijn et al. (2021) evaluated intervention programs designed to develop teachers' intercultural competence and observed significant improvements in teachers' ability to address cultural diversity in the classroom.

Finally, Donath et al. (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of professional development programs for inclusive education and confirmed that these interventions improve learning, technical knowledge, pedagogical skills, and favorable beliefs regarding inclusion.

Reagan and Hambacher (2021) and Liao et al. (2022) presented syntheses regarding teacher education oriented toward equity and its theoretical foundations. Both studies concluded that interventions increase critical awareness and rely on diverse theoretical frameworks to strengthen teachers' commitment to educational equity.

Taken together, these reviews highlight the importance of comprehensive and reflective approaches for preparing teachers capable of promoting social justice and inclusion.

Spanish-language reviews, however, remain more limited. Ramírez (2025) reviewed Ibero-American research focused on social justice within social science didactics between 2014 and 2024 and concluded that most of these studies emphasize the importance of a critical and contextualized approach for transforming educational practices.

Gordillo and Prado (2024) identified current approaches in teacher education and their impact on inclusive pedagogical practices, observing advances in the incorporation of participatory methodologies that promote equity. Garay et al. (2023), when synthesizing teacher education programs related to diversity between 2015 and 2020, identified a tendency to integrate multicultural content and curricular adaptations, although challenges persist in their effective implementation.

Likewise, Soto (2023) analyzed teacher education strategies for inclusive education in countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and Argentina. The author indicated that although specific policies and programs exist, lack of coherence and continuity limits their sustained impact on pedagogical practice.

Similarly, Sanz-Benito et al. (2023) focused their analysis on digital inclusion during initial teacher education and identified growing interest in the topic, although with variations in depth and consistency of content. Zapata-Chiroque (2023) analyzed inclusive education during teacher preparation and emphasized the need to strengthen attitudinal competencies and inclusive practices in an integrated manner.

Finally, Hewstone (2022) highlighted the urgent need to promote spaces for educational innovation in initial teacher education in order to foster inclusion and social justice, as well as the use of critical and creative approaches to prepare teachers for complex contexts.

First, these reviews found that the effectiveness of pedagogical interventions for social justice in teacher education improves when such interventions are holistic, contextualized, reflective, and centered on teaching practice and the lived realities of marginalized communities. Active and sustained participation, together with a willingness to adapt and critically examine one's own practices, are essential for achieving meaningful and lasting change.

On the other hand, most interventions address separately critical awareness, the development of skills and competencies, and teachers' emotional engagement. Nevertheless, there remains a need for a comprehensive exploration of recent primary research in order to determine whether teachers are truly being prepared to teach in and for social justice (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Keles & Munthe, 2025; Liao et al., 2022).

Additionally, limitations are observed in methodological design, along with the absence of prior registration and risk-of-bias assessment within the included primary studies. In general, there is a need for a more systematic review with a methodological design capable of providing robust evidence regarding teacher education in and for social justice.

Based on the studies discussed above, this review seeks to answer the following question: What is the impact of pedagogical interventions aimed at developing social justice in teacher education published over the last five years?

For the purposes of this study, interventions are understood as any intentional pedagogical action designed to modify a situation in order to improve it or prevent it from worsening (Keles & Munthe, 2025).

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach in order to achieve a detailed understanding of social justice based on primary sources. To ensure systematicity and scientific rigor, the PRISMA Statement (Page et al., 2021) was applied to guide the systematic review process. This facilitated a comprehensive examination of recent scientific literature with the aim of identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing studies on pedagogical interventions designed to develop social justice among pre-service teachers, published in scientific journals during the last five years.

Procedures

First phase: research question

Initially, the following research question was formulated through the partial application of the PICO strategy (Participants, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcomes) (Table 1):

What is the impact of pedagogical interventions aimed at developing social justice in teacher education published during the last five years?

Table 1. *Description of the PICO question*

Crterios	Descripción
Participantes	Docentes en formación inicial, docentes en ejercicio en formación continua.
Intervención	Implementación de estrategias o programas dirigidos a desarrollar actitudes, prácticas y conocimientos sobre justicia social.
Comparación	Sin grupo de comparación, experiencias pedagógicas convencionales.
Resultados	Desarrollo de actitudes, prácticas y conocimientos sobre justicia social.
Diseño de los estudios	Estudios de intervenciones, estudios experimentales cualitativos, cuantitativos o mixtos, estudios preexperimentales pre y postest de informe de experiencias pedagógicas.

Nota: La aplicación estricta del formato PICO limita la selección de estudios a únicamente estudios con diseño cuasiexperimental y experimental, por lo que se eligió ampliar la variedad metodológica de los estudios incluidos.

Second phase: search strategy

In this review, the search for scientific publications was conducted using the following sources:

- Electronic information sources: WOS, Scopus, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, ERIC, ProQuest, Dialnet, Google Scholar, Sage Publishing, and Wiley Online Library.
- Reference lists of the included studies.
- Manual searches in specialized journals such as: *Social Justice*, *Journal of Social Justice*, *Social Justice Research*, *Studies in Social Justice*, and *Journal of Education and Social Justice*.
- Social media platforms, academic meetings, and scientific organizations.

Descriptors. The search was carried out using combinations of the following keywords and the Boolean logical operators AND, OR, and NOT. In English, the following terms were used: *social justice OR social inclusion OR inclusive education OR equality of opportunities OR access to quality education OR recognition of diversity AND pre-service teachers OR in-service teachers OR teacher education NOT college professors NOT school students*.

In Spanish, the following terms were used: *justicia social OR inclusión social OR educación inclusiva AND equidad de oportunidad OR acceso a educación de calidad OR reconocimiento a la diversidad AND docentes en formación OR docentes en servicio OR formación del profesorado OR formación docente NOT profesores universitarios*.

Third phase: selection strategy

In this phase, the eligibility of the identified studies was assessed through the review of titles, abstracts, and keywords to confirm that they addressed interventions related to social justice in teacher education. Subsequently, the methodology of each study was examined to verify that the studies involved pedagogical interventions. Finally, access to the full text was confirmed. Table 2 presents the eligibility criteria.

Table 2. *Eligibility criterio*

Criterios de inclusión	Criterios de exclusión
Estudios publicados entre 2020 y 2025.	Estudios publicados antes de 2020.
Estudios en formato de artículo, libro o capítulos de libro y tesis.	Artículos teóricos, editoriales, revisiones narrativas y políticas educativas.
Escritos en español, portugués, francés, italiano, catalán o inglés.	Estudios publicados en idiomas distintos al español, portugués, francés, italiano, catalán o inglés.
Estudios primarios que evalúan intervenciones pedagógicas dirigidas a promover la justicia social en formación docente.	Intervenciones pedagógicas dirigidas a estudiantes o sin relación con formación docente en justicia social.
Acceso a texto completo.	Estudios sin acceso a texto completo.

Fourth phase: information analysis strategy

Once the studies were selected, the full texts were reviewed in order to analyze quantitative variables such as: year, country where the study was conducted, sample size, number of groups, comparison intervention, research design, type of teachers, strategies employed, aspects examined, objectives, and outcomes of the interventions.

For the analysis of the information, the content analysis technique was employed. Through this method, information was compiled to answer the research question. A total of 14 books or book chapters, 2 theses, and 105 scientific articles were downloaded from the previously described information sources, constituting the unit of analysis of the present study. From the review process, the following categories emerged: study design, sample characteristics, intervention strategies employed, outcomes, aspects of social justice evaluated, and study results.

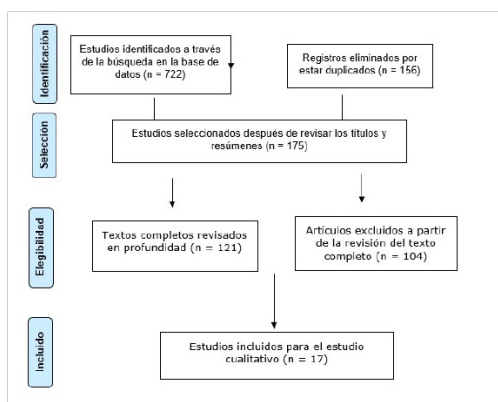
Fifth phase: methodological quality of the included studies

To analyze the methodological quality of the included studies, the Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating Primary Research Papers from a Variety of Fields (Kmet et al., 2004) were used, whose items are described in Table 3. The overall quality of each study was classified as poor ($\geq 50\%$ of criteria met), adequate (50–69%), good (70–80%), and strong ($> 80\%$), according to previous studies in the field.

Results

The following flow diagram (Figure 1) describes the search and selection process of the articles included in this study, based on the criteria established in the PRISMA Statement (Page et al., 2021).

Figure 1. Flow diagram of the search and study selection process



Description of the included studies

This systematic review included seventeen studies: seven were based on mixed-method approaches, seven on qualitative approaches, and three on quantitative approaches. Fourteen were published in English and three in Spanish.

According to the country where the studies were conducted, the distribution was as follows: six in the United States (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Cronin et al., 2021; Larios & Zetlin, 2023;

Larson et al., 2024; McCullough, 2022; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023), three in Spain (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023; Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022; García-Rico et al., 2020), three in Chile (García-Rico et al., 2020; Guzmán et al., 2024; Leiva et al., 2021), and one each in Canada (Paterson, 2023), Turkey (Eren, 2023), New Zealand (Grudnoff et al., 2021), Hong Kong (Chong et al., 2020), Vietnam (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021), and Qatar (Hassanein et al., 2021).

Thirteen studies included pre-service teachers, while four involved in-service teachers. In total, 1,073 teachers participated in the included studies. Eight studies addressed social justice in a general sense; five focused on inclusive education; two on cultural awareness; and two on prejudice, equity, and diversity.

Methodological quality

The results of the methodological quality assessment (Kmet et al., 2004) indicate that most of the included studies met more than 80% of the quality indicators analyzed, and all studies met more than 70%. Consequently, the studies can be considered to have strong quality (n = 10) and good quality (n = 7) (Table 3).

Table 3. *Methodological quality assessment*

Crterios /estudios	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Pregunta/objetivo claramente establecido	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Diseño apropiado	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Aprobación ética	1	2	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	1
Contexto del estudio claro	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Conexión con un marco teórico	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Identificación del muestreo	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
Identificación de los métodos de recopilación de datos	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Identificación del análisis de datos	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Identificación de la validación	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2
Conclusión respaldada por los resultados	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Reflexibilidad de los hallazgos	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1
Puntuación	18	18	17	16	17	17	21	18	17	20	18	21	19	17	20	16	18
	S	S	B	B	B	B	S	S	B	S	S	S	S	B	S	B	S

Synthesis

Based on the analysis of the included studies, the following categories of analysis emerged, related to the design, development, evaluation, and outcomes of the interventions (Table 4).

Table 4. *Description of the included studies*

Autor, año, país	Diseño	Muestra	Estrategia de intervención	Desenlace evaluado	Criterio	Resultados
1: Larios y Zetlin (2023), EE. UU.	Mixto	74, en servicio	Taller y modelo de desarrollo profesional eficaz	Habilidades, disposición y compromiso	Educación inclusiva	Aumentaron el nivel de compromiso y desarrollaron competencias pedagógicas para la inclusión.
2: Guzmán et al. (2024), Chile	Cualitativo, autobiográfico	12, en formación	Clases virtuales y enfoque de justicia social para la acción	Identidad y acción docente	Justicia educativa	Conocen sobre justicia social para la acción y la transformación de los espacios escolares. No obstante, su participación y autonomía son limitadas, lo cual afecta la práctica pedagógica y la identidad docente.
3: Larson et al. (2024), EE. UU.	Mixto	24, en ejercicio	Taller y práctica contemplativa: respiración, meditación, gratitud	Puntuación de sesgo racial implícito	Prejuicios raciales	Después del taller, los participantes disminuyeron el sesgo racial implícito.
4: Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2023), España	Cualitativo	78, en ejercicio	Enseñanza convencional	Competencia	Inclusión educativa	Se registró poco desarrollo de competencias pedagógicas para la atención a la diversidad; tenían información teórica pero esta no tenía relevancia práctica; su enfoque formativo se basaba en modelos mediados por las deficiencias del alumnado.

Autor, año, país	Diseño	Muestra	Estrategia de intervención	Desenlace evaluado	Criterio	Resultados
5: Zhang-Wu y Tian (2023), EE. UU.	Cualitativo	15, en formación	Clase convencional, translingüismo y conciencia crítica del lenguaje	Conciencia translingüística crítica	Diversidad cultural	Hubo desarrollo de conciencia crítica del lenguaje a nivel ideológico. Además, se observaron dificultades para ponerla en práctica. En la planificación, el desarrollo de la competencia del inglés es el objetivo central; el translingüismo se limita a una estrategia de traducción.
6: Eren (2023), Turquía	Mixto	15, en formación	Telecolaboración y modelos de competencia intercultural orientacional y de desarrollo	Conciencia cultural crítica	Diversidad cultural	La telecolaboración promovió el desarrollo intercultural crítico del estudiantado y redujo prejuicios y estereotipos socioculturales.
7: Paterson (2023), Canadá	Mixto, estudio de casos	272, en formación	Clase convencional, teoría crítica de la raza, pedagogía sustentadora cultural y lingüísticamente, y teoría de sistemas ecológicos	Creencias	Equidad, diversidad y justicia social	Los egresados tienen mayores conocimientos sobre la justicia social que sus pares que ingresan.
8: Alsen y Buss (2022), EE. UU.	Mixto	18, en formación	Clase convencional; enfoque basado en la comunidad de práctica y enfoque basado en el aprendizaje-servicio	Conocimientos y habilidades	Diversidad lingüística y cultural	Los docentes aumentaron sus conocimientos sobre diversidad lingüística y cultural y su autoeficacia docente y desarrollaron competencias pedagógicas culturalmente responsables.

Autor, año, país	Diseño	Muestra	Estrategia de intervención	Desenlace evaluado	Criterio	Resultados
9: Ceballos y Saiz-Linares (2022), España	Cualitativo	65, en formación	Clase convencional e indagación biográfica colaborativa	Conocimiento, actitudes	Justicia social	Identificaron situaciones discriminatorias en su biografía de forma reflexiva y crítica, al reflexionar sobre discapacidad, género y origen cultural y/o económico y expresiones discriminatorias (risas, bromas, insultos o agresión).
10: McCullough (2022), EE. UU.	Cualitativo	15, en servicio	Taller, enfoque dialógico crítico y teoría crítica	Conciencia y actitud hacia la diversidad	Justicia social y prejuicios	Hubo receptividad a la integración de las personas diversas en origen étnico y la diversidad corporal como objetivos temáticos de la intervención antiesgos.
11: Leiva et al. (2021), Chile	Mixto	39, en formación	Prácticas docentes y aprendizaje basado en el servicio comunitario	Conocimientos, prácticas	Justicia social	Mejóro la comprensión de la justicia social, y la actitud hacia el trabajo con niños para aprender sobre la justicia social.
12: Cronin et al. (2021), EE. UU.	Cuantitativo, pre y posttest	88, en formación	Prácticas docentes y aprendizaje basado en el servicio comunitario	Conocimientos, prácticas	Equidad y justicia social	El aprendizaje basado en servicios es efectivo para trabajar con estudiantes de secundaria LGBTQ.
13: Hassanein et al. (2021), Catar	Cuantitativo, pre y posttest	98, en formación	Clases convencionales y prácticas docentes centradas en la inclusión	Actitud	Educación inclusiva	Mejóro la actitud de los docentes hacia la educación inclusiva gracias a la combinación de la enseñanza basada en información y en las experiencias de trabajo práctico.

Autor, año, país	Diseño	Muestra	Estrategia de intervención	Desenlace evaluado	Criterio	Resultados
14: García-Rico et al. (2020), Chile, España	Cuantitativo	90, en formación	Prácticas docentes y aprendizaje basado en el servicio comunitario	Percepción práctica	Justicia social	El modelo de aprendizaje-servicio tuvo un efecto positivo en la formación inicial para la justicia social.
15: Grudnoff et al. (2021), Nueva Zelanda	Cuantitativo	84, en servicio	Práctica docente basada en el aprendizaje centrado en la investigación	Conocimientos, prácticas	Equidad educativa	La investigación y la aplicación del marco de equidad en contextos pedagógicos auténticos mejoran las competencias para la equidad.
16: Nguyen y Zeichner (2021), Vietnam	Cualitativo	38, en formación	Prácticas docentes y aprendizaje basado en el servicio comunitario	Creencias	Justicia social	Las experiencias de campo comunitarias desarrollaron las creencias sobre la enseñanza para la justicia social con niños con desigualdades sociales étnicas.
17: Chong et al. (2020), Hong Kong	Mixto	48, en formación	Prácticas docentes y aprendizaje basado en el servicio comunitario	Conocimiento y percepción práctica	Justicia social	Los docentes desarrollaron la competencia de enseñanza para la justicia social a través de la investigación y una percepción positiva hacia la integración de las minorías étnicas y el aprendizaje y participación de la comunidad.

Nota: Se requieren más estudios experimentales y cuasiexperimentales.

Data collection and evaluation techniques

Various data collection techniques and instruments were employed. The most common approach was the use of standardized questionnaires administered before and after a pedagogical intervention (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Chong et al., 2020; Cronin et al., 2021; Eren, 2023; García-Rico et al., 2020; Hassanein et al., 2021; Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Larson et al., 2024; Leiva et al., 2021; McCullough, 2022; Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021; Paterson, 2023), followed by interviews and/or focus groups (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023; Chong et al., 2020; Eren, 2023; Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Larson et al., 2024; Leiva et al., 2021; McCullough, 2022; Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021; Paterson, 2023), and the analysis of written assignments (Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022; Grudnoff et al., 2021; Leiva et al., 2021; Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021).

Less frequently, studies analyzed online discussions and posts (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Eren, 2023), digital journals (Alsen & Buss, 2022), autobiographical reports (Guzmán et al., 2024), written reflections (Larson et al., 2024), and classroom activity observations (Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022).

Approaches to social justice

Variability was observed in the conceptual approaches adopted across the included studies. Although social justice was the central topic, the studies differed in their theoretical frameworks, as well as in the conceptual and operational definitions employed. Most studies did not integrate the ideological, political, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions of social justice, which makes it difficult to obtain conclusive results capable of supporting practical application (Leiva et al., 2021; Cronin et al., 2021).

Larios and Zetlin (2023) identified structural and training-related limitations, as well as the challenges teachers face in addressing broad student diversity within inclusive classrooms. However, their approach tended to emphasize practical barriers without critically examining the systemic causes or underlying ideologies that produce inequality. In contrast, Guzmán et al. (2024) grounded their study in the relationship between professional identity and teachers' ethical-political commitment, highlighting the importance of building critical consciousness and transformative subjectivity for social action; however, they did not further develop the concept of identity within formative practices.

Similarly, Larson et al. (2024) analyzed the impact of an intervention based on contemplative practices aimed at neutralizing implicit racial bias, framing social justice within a proposal centered on individual and reflective change without considering structural, ideological, and political factors. Conversely, Arnaiz-Sánchez et al. (2023) adopted a critical social justice perspective that identified structural and curricular barriers in teacher education, supported by structuralist and critical models emphasizing the need for inclusive educational policies and curricular revision.

Likewise, Zhang-Wu and Tian (2023) relied on critical sociolinguistic theories focused on recognizing marginalized cultural and linguistic practices, although they did not articulate the critical sociolinguistic perspective with the pedagogical proposal. Finally, Eren (2023) proposed a model of critical cultural justice that explored telecollaboration as a tool for developing intercultural awareness, grounded in theories of social learning, power, and culture; however, the study did not outline a theoretical framework explaining social justice from the perspective of cultural awareness.

The reviewed studies did not prioritize interdisciplinary integration or a critical perspective capable of articulating social justice, inclusive education, and public policy within a systemic theoretical framework. This limits a comprehensive understanding of causal factors and possible structural solutions (Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Grudnoff et al., 2021). A multidimensional approach to social justice indicators is necessary in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the pathways for preparing critical and socially just teachers in complex contexts (Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Guzmán et al., 2024).

In addition, several studies did not clearly specify the theoretical models of social justice underpinning the interventions, which hinders critical reflection and academic replication (Larson et al., 2024; Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the studies consistently highlighted the need for deep structural transformations, including those based on individual-centered approaches.

Finally, limitations were observed in the pedagogical operationalization of social justice: although the studies recognized the objectives associated with social justice and the need for didactic strategies capable of systematically articulating theory and practice, these strategies were not always fully developed (Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023; Eren, 2023).

Pedagogical approaches employed

Variability was observed in the pedagogical approaches underpinning the interventions, with a predominance of: (I) service-learning approaches (Chong et al., 2020; Cronin et al., 2021; García-Rico et al., 2020; Leiva et al., 2021; Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021), (II) research-based approaches (Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022; Grudnoff et al., 2021), (III) proposals oriented toward inclusion (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023; Hassanein et al., 2021) and equity (Grudnoff et al., 2021), (IV) the development of intercultural competencies (Eren, 2023), and (V) communities of practice focused on educational social justice (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Guzmán et al., 2024).

On the other hand, one intervention was based on meditation and mindfulness techniques, including contemplation, breathing exercises, meditation, and gratitude practices (Larson et al., 2024). Two interventions were grounded in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy (McCullough, 2022; Paterson, 2023), and one was based on collaborative biographical inquiry (Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022).

The interventions incorporated three main components: observation of authentic practices, planning and implementation of participants' own practices, and analysis and reflection on the training experience.

Outcomes of the interventions

Regarding the impact of the interventions on teacher education, the focus and scope of the outcomes were not homogeneous. Most studies reported a positive impact on cognitive, affective, and behavioral components in an integrated manner, such as attitudes toward inclusive education (Hassanein et al., 2021); knowledge, attitudes, skills, and awareness related to teaching about and for social justice (Chong et al., 2020; Cronin et al., 2021; Eren, 2023); knowledge, perceptions, and pedagogical skills concerning linguistic and cultural diversity in particular (Alsen & Buss, 2022) and social justice in general (García-Rico et al., 2020; Leiva et al., 2021); knowledge and attitudes toward social justice (Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022); awareness, attitudes, and willingness to practice social justice (McCullough, 2022); teacher identity and professional practice (Guzmán et al., 2024); knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to racial prejudice (Larson et al., 2024); and educational beliefs regarding teaching for social justice (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021; Paterson, 2023).

Interventions that prioritized critical reflection and encouraged teachers to question their own prejudices, beliefs, and assumptions proved to be more effective (Ceballos & Saiz-Linares, 2022; Larson et al., 2024; McCullough, 2022). Other interventions successfully promoted direct participation in diverse communities and real-world contexts, such as field experiences, service-learning, and community-based projects, in order to deepen understanding and commitment to social justice (García-Rico et al., 2020; Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021; Paterson, 2023).

Some studies proposed integrating social justice not as an isolated topic, but rather as a cross-cutting axis across courses, activities, and assessments, which improved its impact (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Chong et al., 2020).

In addition, interventions that employed collaborative learning, dialogue, and inquiry through group projects and peer discussions successfully fostered a deep and collective understanding of education (Eren, 2023; Grudnoff et al., 2021). Other interventions significantly improved the perspectives and experiences of teachers working with marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ students and culturally and linguistically diverse communities; they also promoted empathy and advocacy actions (Cronin et al., 2021; Leiva et al., 2021).

It was also observed that moving from awareness to action involves encouraging advocacy, activism, and direct efforts to overcome inequities (García-Rico et al., 2020; Paterson, 2023). Finally, some interventions were adapted to the specific needs, backgrounds, and contexts of pre-service teachers and schools, while also providing sustained support and mentoring to strengthen equitable educational practices (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2023; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023; Hassanein et al., 2021; Larios & Zetlin, 2023).

Discussion

This article explores the impact of pedagogical interventions aimed at developing social justice in both pre-service and in-service teacher education, based on a systematic and updated review of studies published over the last five years. Most of the interventions had a positive impact on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the teaching profession, in line with the review conducted by Donath et al. (2023). This indicates that changes were achieved in knowledge, social and pedagogical practices, and attitudes toward education for social justice, both as a whole and within its specific dimensions.

The effectiveness of the interventions may be associated with two essential aspects of educational success. On the one hand, the use of practice-based pedagogical approaches, which include the observation of good practices, the application of content and strategies in authentic pedagogical situations, as well as the analysis and reflection on one's own practice and that of others with mentors (Donath et al., 2023). On the other hand, social justice represents one of the central educational concerns within teachers' interests and professional needs (Larson et al., 2024; Paterson, 2023).

Previous reviews have shown that experience in inclusive classrooms promotes the development of competencies, as well as conceptual and personal transformation through reflective and meaningful processes (Garay et al., 2023). Likewise, it has been found that when teachers share training spaces with students, they are able to apply the content more easily within their own pedagogical practice. In addition, collaborative participation in the development of pedagogical skills and positive attitudes toward teaching in and for social justice strengthens teachers' understanding, expands their pedagogical competencies, and increases their professional commitment (Larios & Zetlin, 2023).

In the same vein, one of the main contributions of this review lies in identifying practice-based teaching and pedagogical reflection as central strategies within the most effective interventions. This confirms the relevance of active, critical, and experiential approaches, as well as explanatory theories of social justice (Bondy et al., 2018; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021). Likewise, it demonstrates that the mere transmission of knowledge is insufficient and instead highlights the importance of fostering profound transformations in teachers' attitudes and behaviors (Bondy et al., 2018; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021). Similarly, other reviews have determined that the use of professional development models is effective for implementing inclusive education. Such models include content study, active learning, collaboration, mentoring, reflection on pedagogical practice, and expert feedback (Donath et al., 2023).

Most of the studies included describe strategies for teaching in and for social justice, yet few proposals actually put these principles into practice. Previous reviews identified a similar tendency (Liao et al., 2022). In this regard, it is necessary for pedagogical interventions to materialize the principles they propose so that experience itself promotes learning (Kitchen & Taylor, 2020; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Ryan et al., 2022). Likewise, this review underscores the fundamental role teachers play as agents of social change, capable of implementing inclusive pedagogies that value diversity and promote empathy and a sense of belonging in the classroom. This aspect aligns with theoretical perspectives that conceive social justice as a dynamic and relational praxis requiring emotional commitment and ongoing reflection (Keles & Munthe, 2025; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021).

For their part, three studies analyzed how the development of cultural awareness for diversity improves educational knowledge and practices related to social justice (Alsen & Buss, 2022; Eren, 2023; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023). Similarly, another review (Garay et al., 2023) found that interventions aimed at developing cultural awareness generate changes in the beliefs, practices, and attitudes of pre-service teachers. In this context, intercultural teacher education strengthens inclusive and culturally respectful education, helps teachers recognize the cultural particularities of students, and allows for the creation of respectful, diverse, equitable, and just learning environments (Romijn et al., 2021).

In line with the five dimensions of multicultural education proposed by Banks (1995), teaching practices are needed that promote equity and inclusion; integrate diverse content into the curriculum in order to reflect multiple cultures and perspectives; propose alternatives that foster critical thinking and challenge dominant narratives; draw upon cultural patterns to empower students and strengthen their identity and participation; interrupt patterns that

marginalize or exclude by questioning discriminatory practices; address and dismantle prejudices present in educational settings; and, finally, empower students to recognize their own agency, participate actively, and contribute to social transformation within their contexts.

Within this framework, teachers play a fundamental role in the implementation of social justice. The success of education for social justice depends, in part, on teacher education and professional development, as well as access to specialized support. Properly trained teachers will be able to adopt inclusive pedagogies and holistic approaches that support differentiated instruction, foster positive relationships, value diversity, and promote empathy, understanding, and a sense of belonging for all individuals.

This article describes the current state of research on how programs prepare teachers to teach in, about, and for social justice, thereby helping to close the existing gap in the Spanish-language literature. This work provides valuable information for designing teacher education programs and pedagogical strategies, formulating educational policies, and promoting fair and equitable education, in line with recent reviews (Gordillo & Prado, 2024). However, further research is needed that integrates different dimensions of teacher preparation and evaluates, through longitudinal approaches, the impact of interventions on actual educational practice.

Therefore, the findings may help teachers and teacher educators improve their understanding of education for social justice and develop pedagogical competencies to teach from this perspective. In this sense, it is recommended that teacher education programs prepare educators to recognize institutional, educational, and social injustice while acquiring the skills necessary to act as agents of change capable of providing fair, equitable, egalitarian, and inclusive educational practices, so that students may receive a comprehensive education (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Keles & Munthe, 2025; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Ryan et al., 2022). Furthermore, based on the review, it is recommended to implement flexible curricula adapted to the contexts and characteristics of students, allowing adjustments according to their needs and guaranteeing everyone's right to learn.

Likewise, it is proposed that teachers be offered access to specialized support and constructive practice-based teacher education modalities, such as pedagogical mentoring. In this way, it would be possible to contribute to the construction of new knowledge and the development of the proposed competencies necessary to ensure the sustainability and success of pedagogical interventions.

Consequently, teacher education for social justice cannot be understood as an isolated process, but rather as part of an educational system that must facilitate favorable structural conditions for equity (Bindhani & Gopinath, 2024; Ryan et al., 2022). Therefore, based on the findings, it is proposed to design and implement interventions with a comprehensive and practical approach to learning how to teach for social justice in practice (Kavanagh, 2017), as a cross-cutting and longitudinal axis of teacher education programs. Likewise, pedagogical support mechanisms are needed that include the identification of good practices, reflection, analysis, and critique of one's own and others' praxis, in order to improve pedagogical knowledge and skills, as pointed out by Gordillo and Prado (2024).

Within this framework, the use of critical, comprehensive, and constructive pedagogical approaches is recommended—approaches that go beyond the mere transmission of information and that also develop proactive attitudes toward social justice, as well as the pedagogical competence necessary to eradicate injustice within educational settings, foster critical reflection on educational practices, and provide quality education for all.

Finally, although the objective of this review was achieved, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, social justice was approached globally, which made it difficult to identify studies focused on specific dimensions. Second, teacher educators were excluded from this study, even though their perceptions may influence the effectiveness of interventions. Third, the number of included studies and the observed methodological variability complicate comparisons between studies and limit the possibility of generalization.

Given the limited amount of high-quality experimental research on teacher education in and for social justice, more studies are needed to complement and expand the existing evidence on the topic. Future research could evaluate the impact of teacher education programs grounded in social justice practice on teachers' and students' learning and social practices. It would also be necessary to analyze the perceptions, practices, and attitudes toward inclusion, equity, and diversity among both pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as among students at different educational levels.

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