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Original Research

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Teacher Knowledge and Confidence Integrating Social Change Concepts in K–12 Classrooms

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Abstract

The purpose of this survey research was to examine the perspectives of K–12 classroom teachers about their knowledge of social change concepts and their confidence in implementing these into their existing curriculum. A questionnaire was used to (a) examine the perspectives of K–12 classroom teachers about the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to implement social change concepts into their teaching and (b) define areas of social change that teachers struggle to implement in K–12 classrooms. We employed Wilcoxen signed rank tests to determine if differences existed between what teachers reported they knew and their confidence in integrating 11 social change issues and their self-reported comfort level integrating those issues into a classroom. Findings showed that teachers are concerned about social change issues, as most of the 199 participants listed issues about race and digital literacy among the top issues needing to be integrated into K–12 curriculum. Open-ended responses were open-coded and indicated that teachers have social change knowledge but may lack the training and support from the administration to successfully integrate these issues into their teaching.

Keywords: *K–12 education, social change, teacher confidence*

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Introduction

For practicing teachers, calls for the integration of social change concepts throughout the curriculum coupled with shifting definitions and practices related to social change can be confusing. It is important that teachers begin and continue their teaching careers with adequate knowledge of their understanding of social change concepts and even more importantly, that they address what the understanding of these concepts is within the educational contexts of the student populations and communities they serve (Ayers et al., 2016; Beach, 2023; Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2023; Lee, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2018).

The purpose of this survey research study was to examine the perspectives of K–12 classroom teachers about their knowledge of social change concepts and their confidence in implementing these social change concepts into their existing curriculum. The pilot-tested, content-validated survey was used to (1) examine the perspectives of K–12 classroom teachers about the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to implement social change concepts into their teaching; and (2) define areas of social change teachers struggle to implement in K–12 classrooms.

Defining Characteristics of Social Justice and Social Change

Definitions of social justice and social change have varied throughout history, throughout the field of study, throughout the political context, and throughout social and environmental contexts. Definitions of social justice and social change are often constructed using a wide range of theoretical perspectives and educational agendas (Burke & Collier, 2016). One most often finds that social justice refers to change at the societal level with societal elements, such as fair treatment and impartial distribution or allocation of benefits, being a focus. In contrast to social justice, social change is most often viewed as emphasizing the betterment of the individual. Although concepts related to social justice influenced the research for this study, the primary focus of the study was on how practicing teachers define and implement concepts related to social change.

Literature Framing the Study

Historical View

Saylor (1982) described, at length, the long history of the choices made in American schooling as a function of the purpose of schools during each time period. From the earliest days of education in America, societal expectations and norms were the focus of teaching, conduct for teachers, and the materials used to teach. Early foundational curricula focused mainly on the catechism. *The New England Primer* drilled students on letters and learning words, such as “abusing, bewitching, confounded, drunkenness” (Saylor, 1982, p. 4). In colonial schools, education was limited primarily to Latin (the language of the Bible) and Greek, as it was a requirement for entrance to Harvard. One need only look at the history of education to understand that schooling has been a primary vehicle for promoting the values current society deems important.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the U.S. Government had developed what became known as the Seven Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (Department of the Interior, 1918). These principles included worthy home membership and civic education. Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (2018/1916), advocated for the role of education as part of democracy, not divorced from all societal considerations. Dewey asserted that the renewal of social groups takes place through education, and that, “Education is thus a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating process” (p. 13), and that education, at its core, is a shaping activity to help form the standards of social activity within any society. Education in the United States has been seen for much of the previous decades as a way in which a social group maintains itself by the growth, through education, of its immature members (Dewey, 2018/1916).

Dewey was not the only influential educator to call for the preparation of educators to address social standards to improve society. Educators, such as Counts, DuBois, Woodson, and others, challenged educators "to press forward with an agenda of social transformation" (Apple, 2013, p. 2). More recently, individuals such as Keddie and Mills (2009), Darling-Hammond (2017), and Cochran-Smith and Keefe (2022) have advocated for education and educators to be leaders in social change initiatives.

Over the years, the concepts of social justice and social change became increasingly present in education, educational institution mission statements, and teacher preparation standards. Keddie and Mills (2009) wrote that "education for social justice is not a new idea, and many are working tirelessly to ensure that education is built on equity, activism and social literacy" (p. xiv). However, definitions, standards for preparation, and practices related to concepts of social justice and social change can vary widely across educational settings.

Inconsistent instruction and practices related to social justice and social change led professional accreditation bodies, such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), as well as state departments of education to add standards for the preparation of all teachers that emphasized social change concepts and practices. In 2006, NCATE removed the phrase "social justice" from its glossary definition for dispositions (Heybach, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2007; Margolis, 2006). This body, now the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), removed language related to social justice in favor of language promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (caepnet.org).

CAEP Standard 1 ensures that candidates develop an understanding of the critical concepts and principles of their discipline and facilitates candidates' reflection on their personal biases to increase their understanding and practice of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Social change, as recognized by professional groups, further demonstrates the importance of strengthening the standards of education in promoting inclusive standards and skill sets for teachers to demonstrate in practice. The concept of social change contains a focus on social and civic policy changes for the betterment of all individuals. Social change, rather than social justice, was the primary focus of this study.

Education and Social Change

A historical body of literature calls for teacher education programs to prepare future and practicing educators to be agents of social change (Cochran-Smith, 2004, 2010; Cochran-Smith et al., 2022; Stager & Fullan, 1992; Gunn & Bennett, 2022; Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Spitzman & Balconi, 2019; Zeichner et al., 2016). Early analysis of research and practices for social change education supported the concepts as integral to teacher preparation and practice. In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Stager and Fullan (1992) called for teachers to be agents of social change. They stated:

> Society expects citizens to be capable of dealing with change throughout life, both individually as well as collaboratively. Education is the only social institution with the potential to fundamentally contribute to this goal. Education has not been at all successful in teaching people to deal with change and must begin to see itself and be seen as experts in the dynamics of change. … Educators, administrators, and teachers alike must become skilled change agents. If they do become skilled change agents with a moral purpose, educators will make a difference in the lives of students from all backgrounds, and by so doing help produce greater capacity in society to cope with change. (p. 2)

Moving forward, the calls for direct intervention and explicit teaching of social change concepts continued. To develop teachers as agents of social change, teacher education programs began to emphasize social change concepts throughout their programs. However, Reagan and Hambacher (2021) in a review of social change concepts in preservice teacher education programs described the term as "frequently … undertheorized and conceptually ambiguous" (p. 2). McDonald and Zeichner (2009) suggested that, when applied to teacher

education, concepts related to social change were interpreted in so many ways that the meaning was weakened; and, in practice, frequently became synonymous with merely offering teaching candidates a multicultural education course or a training placement in schools with diverse student populations. Grant and Agosto (2008) wrote that teacher education related to social change often lacks, "attention to definition, context, and assessment" (p. 194). Inconsistencies in definition and expectation can impede any useful calls for change.

Given the emphasis on—and implementation of—teacher preparation practices and standards related to social change, one may surmise that most practicing teachers are well prepared to be agents of change. This may not be the case. Cochran-Smith et al., (2016) wrote that "teacher preparation has emerged as an acutely politicized and publicized issue in U.S. education policy and practice, and there have been fierce debates about whether, how, by whom, and for what purposes teachers should be prepared" (p. 3). Teachers often express a "commitment to social justice education but these commitments can be confounding to put into practice" (Sibbett, 2022, p. 3). Teachers are often wary to consider implementing social change concepts in their practice due to fear of losing jobs or social recriminations from parents, school boards, and politicians (Gunn & Bennett, 2022; Liggett, 2011; Margolis, 2006). Therefore, a teacher may hold ideals to be an agent of social change but outside variables—both professional and personal—impact the goal of teaching for social change in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

It is important that teachers begin and continue their teaching careers with adequate knowledge of their understanding of social change concepts, and even more importantly they address what the understanding of these concepts is within the student population (Lee, 201). To assist teachers in implementing topics related to social change within their classrooms, one must examine the perspectives of K–12 classroom teachers' knowledge and confidence with social change topics. By defining the areas of social change K–12 teachers struggle to implement, and examining what resources teachers articulate are needed, a plan to support teachers can be developed and training materials can be targeted to assist teachers in combining academic and social change outcomes.

To frame the exploration into K–12 teacher knowledge and confidence in integrating social change concepts into their curriculum, we relied heavily on the notions of social change and social justice offered by Cochran-Smith et al., (2009) and the work of Sensoy and DiAngelo (2009), who offered further insight on developing social justice literacy in education. The tenets of the framework the authors presented is that simply agreeing that social change is important is not enough. Rather, educators must practice social change; social change requires action. The study was used to explore specific social change issues and actions by current K–12 educators and their existing classroom curricula.

Research Questions

To investigate K–12 teachers' knowledge of—and experience with—teaching social change concepts in their existing curricula, we approached the study with four research questions:

RQ1. How do U.S. K–12 teachers define key social change concepts?

RQ2. What social change concepts do K–12 teachers identify as most important to teach in the classroom?

RQ3. What is the relationship between teacher knowledge of social change concepts and their confidence to integrate those concepts in a classroom setting?

RQ4. What support or resources do K–12 teachers report are provided by their district to integrate social change concepts into their classroom teaching?

For research question three, our null hypothesis was that there was no statistically significant relationship between a teacher's knowledge of a social change issue and their confidence to integrate that concept into a classroom setting. Our alternate hypothesis was, then, that statistically significant differences do exist between a teacher's knowledge of social change concepts and their confidence to integrate those concepts in a classroom setting. We theorized from the existing literature that teachers would have more knowledge of social change issues than confidence to integrate those issues into the existing curriculum.

Methods

The approach to gaining answers to the research questions was a Likert-scale survey, with three open-ended response questions. All data were collected anonymously via an online survey company. The data were collected over 2 months, with the survey instrument being sent three times to gain the maximum participation.

Sample

The use of Survey Monkey Audience provided a national sample, large enough to meet the calculated power needed for the .03 effect size (N = 195). From K–5 teachers, N = 91; 6–8 teachers, N = 42; 9–12 teachers N = 66; total N = 199. While we did not receive completed, usable responses from 300, the sample of 199 is greater than the needed 195. We did receive over 50 responses that were deleted because participants did not complete all the questions, or discontinued the survey before all questions were marked. Participant experience levels varied. While teachers with 0–5 years of experience represent the largest percentage of the sample, overall, the sample is not overly skewed toward one level of experience.

Table 1. *Participant Years of Experience*

Years Teaching	Frequency	Percentage of Total
0–5	55	27.9
6–10	46	23.9
11–15	47	23.9
16–20	19	9.6
> 21	29	14.7

Note: percent may not add to 100 due to rounding; in the sample, there were 88 males and 103 females. The majority of the participants (N = 141) self-reported their ages between 30 and 60 years old.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used to explore the experiences of K–12 teachers was pilot-tested and content validated through an electronically distributed pilot survey. Twelve participants from multiple U.S. locations were recruited through social media, and each was asked to respond about the clearness and usability of the questions and to narrow down the topics that would be listed on the final survey. The original list contained 13 social change concepts, which were derived from searching current literature on the topic. We provided three to five examples for each topic listed on the pilot survey. For example, the category Creating Healthy Communities was followed by a list of examples: Healthcare, Mental Health, Gun Violence, Substance Abuse, Hunger, Substance Related Issues, Homelessness, Sustainable Development, and Food Insecurity.

The sample of 12 K–12 teachers who responded to the pilot study indicated that only 11 of the concepts presented were a priority in U.S. classrooms and suggested three or fewer examples per concept. As a research team, we refined the survey according to the feedback provided. The refined survey contained 11 social change concepts for teachers to rank in order of importance to K–12 classrooms. Participants were then asked about

the extent of knowledge and level of confidence in teaching social change concepts. They were asked to rank both items on a Likert scale of four choices, from "not at all aware" to "extremely aware" and "not at all confident" to "extremely confident." Participants were then asked three open-ended questions about how they define social change, whether their school system provided any development or training on these topics, and a final response asking for any further information they wished to provide.

The 11 issues the pilot group ranked as "most important to educators" were used to inquire about the knowledge of and confidence in integrating social change issues into the existing curriculum. For instance, the first issue, Rights and Equity, was presented asking participants to rate their knowledge of this issue. Immediately afterward, they were asked to rank their confidence in integrating this issue into the existing curriculum.

Data Collection

The survey instrument was electronically distributed by Survey Monkey Audience. This paid survey company distributed the survey to thousands of U.S.-based K–12 teachers in an attempt to receive 300 survey responses. A priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power version 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) for sample size estimation. The effect size used was 0.3, and the significance level (alpha) used was .05. With a power of .80 the minimum sample size needed was $N = 84$, and with a power of .99 the maximum sample size needed was $N = 195$. Three populations of interest were identified: U.S. teachers in grades K–5, grades 6–8, and grades 9–12, and we attempted to gain 100 participants per group.

Data Analysis

Once all data were collected through Survey Monkey Audience, raw data were provided in an Excel spreadsheet with no personal identifiers attached. The Likert scale items were analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Statistics 28 (SPSS Statistics 28). We employed the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to compare the means of the responses in each category. We compared the teachers' responses by concept of their extent of knowledge about a topic and their confidence in integrating that topic into their teaching. This nonparametric test is similar to the dependent *t*-test and does not assume the normality of the data.

The open-ended responses were analyzed by first uploading the qualitative responses to a Word Cloud program (wordclouds.com) to discern the words and phrases most mentioned. This program helped visualize the data and was useful in clearly demonstrating what patterns were emerging without researcher bias in the first pass of coding. After the word clouds provided clear text patterns, the open-ended answers were reviewed and coded for those patterns. The second coding pass included words and phrases that were related to the research questions but not identical to each other, so they were not detected by the original coding pass using the terms emerging from the word cloud. There were also some discrepant cases where participants expressed strong opinions, but they did not emerge as a pattern. These are reported in the results to ensure the credibility of the analysis.

Results

Research Question 1

In RQ1, we asked how U.S. K–12 teachers define key social change concepts. This question was explored through an open-ended, definitional question on the electronic survey. We asked each participant to complete the "I define social change as:" statement. Answers varied widely from simple responses like, "Everyone treated fairly across the board," to more in-depth responses like, "Recognizing and addressing patterns that have systematically helped or hurt a particular group of people." The coded responses were from all participants who chose to respond with an answer ($N = 143$). In this number, we included all responses that were multiple words

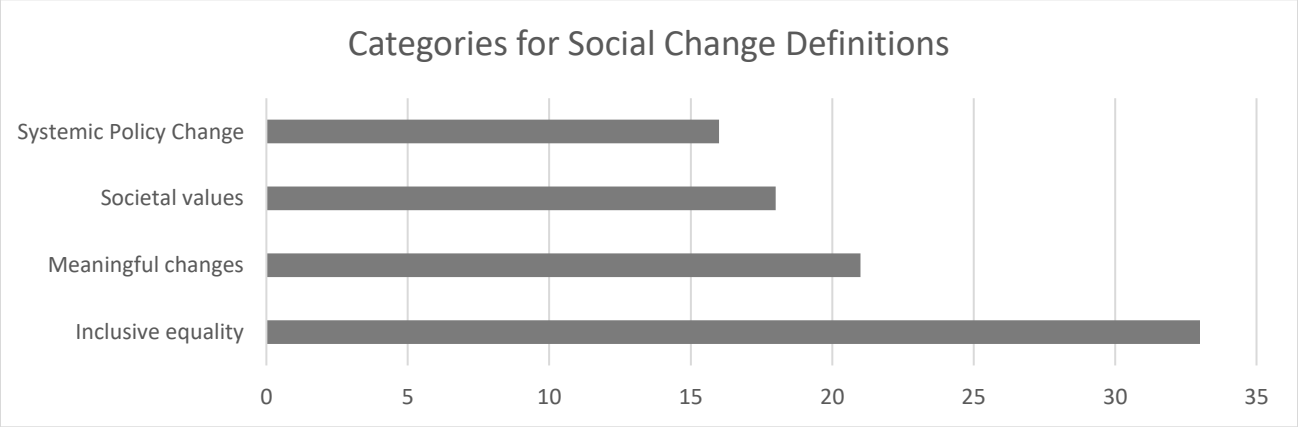
or of some meaning to the prompt. We also included all one-word answers that had some bearing on the definition, including words like "equity," and even one-word responses that simply said "garbage." We did not include responses like "IDK," or "lovely." Table 2 represents the coded responses to RQ1.

Table 2. *Initial Codes for Responses from Definitions Offered*

Original Codes	Frequency
Equal/Fair	29
Specific Changes	17
Awareness/Acceptance/Recognition	12
System/Policies	10
Justice/Injustice	6
Opportunities Needed	6
Inclusive	4
Culture	4
Total	88

The initial codes of the 88 noted text segments were categorized to find commonalities between the definitions teachers provided for social change. These categories are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Categories for Definitions Provided by K–12 Teachers*



The category "inclusive equality" was most mentioned in the definitions provided by the participants. Some definitions included phrases that were initially sorted into multiple codes. For example, one participant responded:

> Social change begins with certain social trends and thoughts. Social change causes changes in a nation's culture. Changes can occur naturally through society's general majority acceptance of a trend or idea. At times legislation is passed to help acceptance of the change. Lately, we have seen some social change through legislation that has been forced on the population against its will.

This response contained phrases that were coded as "*specific change*, *culture*, and *policies*." While there were 197 total surveys completed, of the qualitative responses, $N = 88$ for the number of times these codes appeared in the data set.

Research Question 2

RQ2 explored the social change concepts that K–12 teachers identify as most important to teach in the classroom. Responses were counted and the results were rank ordered with 1 identified as the most important and 11 as the least important: (1) issues surrounding race; (2) information literacy; (3) human rights; (4) economic inequality; (5) social and emotional learning; (6) healthy planet; (7) personal responsibility; (8) cultivating an inclusive society; (9) social responsibility; (10) rights and equity; (11) and creating healthy communities.

Research Question 3

RQ3 was used to define the relationship between teacher knowledge of social change concepts and their confidence in integrating those concepts in a classroom setting. Each participant was provided with the list of social change concepts and asked to provide two responses; one response for the knowledge they possessed about that concept, and the second to rate the confidence they had in integrating this concept into their curriculum. Ideally, participant confidence would rank at least as high as their knowledge of each concept. For this sample, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare the matched pair means of the responses on each category as the data were nonparametric. For the portion of the survey that asked about knowledge of the concepts, Table 3 presents the mean of the Likert responses (1, 2, 3, or 4).

Table 3. *Likert Score Comparison by Social Change Concept*

Social Change Concept	Knowledge Mean	Confidence Mean	*Z* Score	*P* Value
Rights and Equity	2.9695	3.0457	-1.527	0.127
Creating Healthy Communities	3.0863	3.0152	-1.299	0.191
Healthy Planet	3.0355	2.9289	-1.862	0.063
Cultivating an Inclusive Society	3.0406	2.9898	-0.928	.0353
Social Responsibility	3.2690	3.0558	-4.007	<.001
Personal Responsibility	3.2335	3.2132	-0.115	0.909
Economic Inequality	2.9492	2.8629	-1.613	0.107
Human Rights	3.1218	2.9848	-2.441	0.015
Social and Emotional Learning	3.0914	3.1421	-1.043	0.297
Information Literacy	3.0305	2.9949	-0.870	0.384
Issues Surrounding Race	3.0863	2.9543	-2.487	0.013

Note: Likert-Scale range 1–4; 1 being "less/no awareness or confidence" and 4 being "high awareness or confidence"

Three matched pairs yielded a statistically significant difference between what participants reported they knew about a topic and their confidence in teaching this topic in their curriculum. Only *social responsibility* ($p < 0.001$), *human rights* ($p = 0.015$), *issues surrounding race* ($p = 0.013$), and *cultivating an inclusive society* ($p = 0.0353$) were different at a statistically significant level. Interestingly, *issues surrounding race* was the topic most selected by participants as the priority in integrating social change into K–12 curricula (see RQ2). Though other topics did not show statistically significant differences in means for the items, it may be useful to examine the individual means for each concept.

Research Question 4

RQ4 asked teachers to report support or resources provided by their district or school to help them effectively integrate social change concepts into their classroom teaching. The majority of the responses provided by the participants indicated that their school or district did provide some development for the kinds of concepts presented in the questionnaire. As shown in Figure 2, the bulk of the training and development offered to current K–12 teachers was in the form of workshops or seminars, and not sustained, ongoing support and training. Only 28 of the participants listed any support offered by schools or districts. This was not a required item, so of the full sample, more may have been provided training but chose not to respond. Even in this category of responses, a very small segment repeated that these concepts should not be taught in schools.

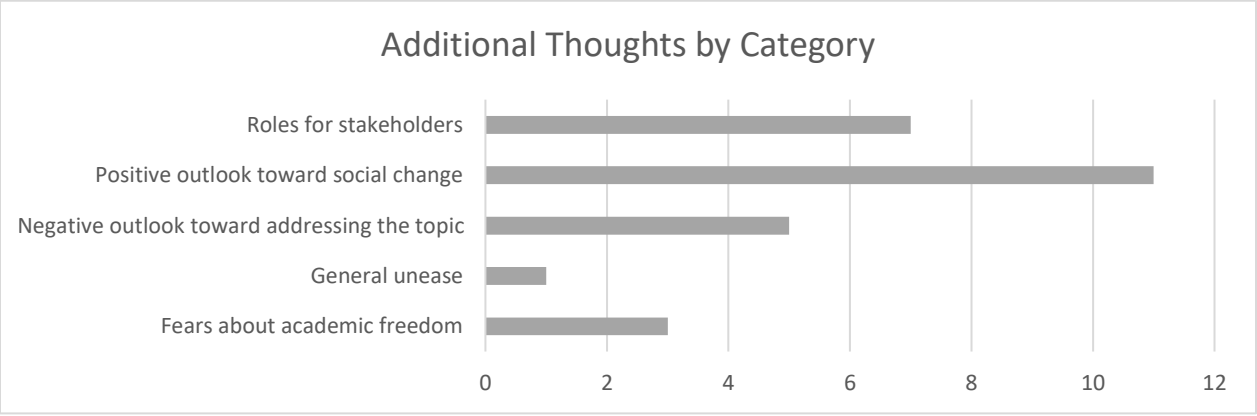
Figure 2. *Training and Development Reported by Participants*

Note: Total *N* for codes in this open response = 28.

Additional Information

The final item on the questionnaire asked if participants wanted to share any additional information about the topic of K–12 social change in classrooms. Again, 28 respondents chose to provide answers to this final question. Figure 3 provides the categorization of the comments provided.

Figure 3. *Categorized Additional Thoughts Offered by Participants*



Total *N* for codes in this open response = 27.

Most of the responses provided by participants indicated a clear, positive outlook on the role of social change in the K–12 classroom. For example, "creating an interruption to the pattern is essential," and "ranking [items] was difficult, most are a priority." There were negative comments offered as well. One participant offered, "Don't ruin the world with your good intentions." Some participants went further and mentioned specific roles for stakeholders. Examples included the notions that there are many stakeholders, and all have different roles, and several articulated that these concepts are best addressed by high school teachers and students. Some comments brought attention to how social change has been politicized by stating, "My students and I are interested but illegal in Florida," and "Textbooks thrown away, not allowed to use any news media, cannot recommend materials for research projects." These comments bear further exploration and offer an opportunity for future research.

Discussion

There are myriad definitions and understandings of terms related to social change. Some working definitions of social change that affect education have been articulated through bodies governing educator preparation programs (Pugach et al., 2018). The inclusion of the concept of social change in education standards and dispositions for initial preparation for teachers has changed across the years; and, as evidenced by current political and social debate, is not without controversy. The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of K–12 classroom teachers about the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to implement social change concepts in their teaching.

When asked to define social change, the term "inclusive equality" was used by many study participants. Another common theme was the idea that it is important to ensure that attention is paid so that all students are included in educational processes. Teacher education programs and regulatory entities have heavily emphasized, over the past years, concepts related to inclusion and equality for all students. Collaboration among educators and connecting with others, including family members, to achieve inclusion and equity for all students are valued outcomes for educators. The idea that connectivity and collaboration provide the solidarity necessary for the work that individuals do, including teachers, is one of the key tenets of social change (Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Woodrow, 2018).

Related to the theme of inclusion is acknowledging that there are systems of exclusion that have historically and continue to exclude populations from positive learning experiences. In an address given in Philadelphia, Darling-Hammond asked:

> Will public education perish, or will we be able to join hands and rescue probably the most important institution in our society today? Does every child have a right to learn and how do we secure that right for every child? (2020, p. 1).

Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) wrote that "good and just teaching" reflects an essential purpose of teaching in a democratic society in which the teacher is an advocate for students whose work supports larger efforts for social change." (p. 1). Through this research study, the authors began to look at topics related to practicing teachers' views on inclusion, exclusion, and social change. Social responsibility, human rights, and issues surrounding race were consistently reported by participants as important, but concepts where confidence in implementation was lacking. These concept needs to be explored further in future research.

When teachers were asked to prioritize social-change-related concepts in RQ2, the top three priorities were issues related to race, information literacy, and human rights. Teachers' experiences that are rooted in areas that they feel are important social concepts influence what they may deem as important for making decisions from the schools where they decide to teach, as well as how they approach concepts of social justice (Pantić & Florian, 2015). When it comes to issues of race, groups of teachers may at times be at odds—not only based on

ideology but also on life experiences (Duncan, 2018). Educator preparation programs must be prepared to do the difficult work of having pre-service and in-service teachers reflect on their own experiences while they develop their professional practice.

Some competencies identified as being ones that teachers must have include being able to develop a pedagogy that includes all; recognizing the impact and importance of the home and community while working with diverse families; and having a broader understanding of educational change and how changes affect learning in contexts of exclusion and disadvantage (Pantić & Florian, 2015). Educator preparation programs are positioned to provide opportunities and support for educators as they develop these skills that are rooted in very complex notions. Inclusive practices are an important part of in-service teaching, and school leadership may need to provide ongoing professional development to increase teacher capacity and confidence.

When examining the importance of social change concepts and the confidence in their ability to address a specific aspect of social change, educators identified "issues surrounding race" as a very important area about which they did not feel a high level of confidence in addressing. The idea of understanding the importance of certain social change concepts while reporting not having the confidence to do the work may be related to the overall complexity of teaching. Reagan and Hambacher (2021) identified the justice praxis framework as it relates to teachers being wholly engaged in the process of learning to teach where social justice is a part of that learning, as related to the emotional aspect of teaching. The challenge of supporting teachers as they become social change educators is due, in part, to the complexities of working with the social and emotional nature of critical social change concepts. The study of schools and educators who are actively engaged in social change education should include the work of social change educators, the students they teach, schools, and the communities they serve (Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Woodrow, 2018).

Looking closely at the results of the quantitative analyses, a positive finding was that in many social change areas, teachers reported knowing about important social change concepts as nearly 3.0 or greater on a 4-point scale. The teachers were less confident in how to integrate these concepts into their regular curriculums, however. The notable exception was the category of social and emotional learning (SEL). In this instance, teachers were both knowledgeable about SEL and relatively confident in integrating those concepts into their classroom teaching. This represents a timely result, as SEL has been the recent focus of much professional development (Hamilton et al., 2019; Hamilton & Schwartz, 2019), as well as being frequently researched in the literature (CASEL, n.d.; Levin & Segev, 2023).

The study affirms the literature in that it further explores the views of social change by current K–12 educators, the students they teach, their schools, and the communities they serve (Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Woodrow, 2018). The findings also extend the literature by clearly defining how current K–12 educators view issues of social change, as well as their knowledge of—and expertise in—implementing them in their classrooms.

Limitations

The results obtained from this study were affected by the sample size and were dependent upon respondent honesty. Future studies should attempt to obtain a larger sample of respondents.

Participants were not asked to respond to more detailed demographic questions to determine additional items, such as those related to age, identified race, or ethnicity. This is a limitation that should be addressed in any future research.

Participants did not identify the type of teacher preparation program or the year of graduation. Given the emphasis on outcomes related to diversity, equity, and inclusion by professional bodies such as CAEP, it would also be useful to examine the standards affiliated with teacher education programs and the year in

which the participants graduated as licensed teachers. This information may provide a greater understanding of the standards in place at the time of the respondents' graduation and the impact on current practice related to the inclusion of social change concepts within the classroom setting.

Conclusion

One's understanding of social change concepts impacts their ability to address these concepts in practice. The authors of this study looked at how K–12 teachers defined key social change concepts, social change concepts that participants believed were most important to address in classrooms, the relationship between their knowledge of social change concepts, their confidence to integrate those concepts within the curriculum, and the supports currently provided by districts to help them integrate social concepts within their classrooms. Although study participants were confident in defining and implementing most social change concepts, they were most concerned with concepts related to issues surrounding race, social responsibility, and human rights in their classrooms. More information is needed from a wider audience of participant educators to fully address the concepts related to social change and how best to assist educators in addressing concepts of social change within their classrooms.

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