

Supporting literacy through social justice literature: A conceptual argument for reading time in preservice teaching

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Abstract

Preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with varying reading habits and conceptions of social justice. This specific problem of practice—made visible by personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), is examined using *currere* (Pinar, 2020) and Simpson and Cremin’s (2022) concept of the additive trio. This conceptual paper asserts the need to simultaneously support preservice teachers’ reading habits, knowledge of children’s literature, and understandings of social justice by allocating preservice curriculum time toward this purpose. It also reveals the hidden curricular labour required to respond to a problem of practice.

Keywords: Additive Trio; Children’s Literature; *Currere*; Personal Practical Knowledge; Preservice Teachers; Social Justice; Teacher Education

A Curriculum Journey

Professors of literacy and education have been called on to provide supports for future literacy professionals through strategies that combat aliteracy (Nathanson et al., 2008) and promote social justice (Abdi, 2023; Burke et al., 2017), especially in a context where all teachers are considered literacy teachers (Kosnik & Menna, 2013). This appeal from researchers was felt as an embodied (Gallop, 1988; Pinar, 2020) call in my practice as a teacher educator, acting as a catalyst for me to create curricular movement in a New Brunswick teacher education program with social justice as a core value. In this paper, I examine the relationship between literary experiences and social justice learning in teacher education, weaving them into the curricular narratives that story my own role as an English teacher turned teacher educator. The concepts of personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and *currere* (Pinar, 2020) scaffold this examination, and work to show how the past, present, and future can lend insight into the exigencies of a pressing curriculum challenge. One specific understanding – that preservice teachers have varying reading habits and conceptions of social justice – revealed a problem of practice that inspired a curricular response. In the sections that follow I will take you with me on a curricular journey, arriving at a recommendation for dedicated reading time in support of both literacy pedagogy and social justice in preservice teacher education.

Personal Practical Knowledge

As a curriculum scholar and teacher educator working within narrative traditions of thinking to inform my teaching practice, I come to this inquiry with a conceptual lens that views teachers as curriculum planners with knowledge derived from everyday

experience, gained in context, and compounded over time (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Through this lens, knowledge is understood as a representation of experiences, knowledge is composed out of experience and composing knowledge is a form of experience (Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Clandinin et al, 2006, 2015a, 2015b; Greene, 1978; Van Manen, 2016). Grounded in this tradition, the concept of personal practical knowledge offers further focalizing power. Personal practical knowledge is defined in this paper as it is by the originators of the concept, Connelly and Clandinin, in 1988:

Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any one teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation (p. 25).

Personal practical knowledge centralizes the experiences and contexts of educators as a way of acknowledging how these dimensions develop and influence educational practice. It recognizes how teachers' autobiographical and educational pasts inevitably interact with their curricular thinking to inform the future. As a former language and literature teacher turned teacher educator, I draw on teaching and scholarly experiences – personal practical knowledge – to address the exigencies of a present pedagogical situation: *How can I support preservice teachers who come to their Bachelor of Education degree with varying reading habits and conceptions of social justice?*

Seeking Curricular Insight: The Role of Currere

In seeking curricular insight, I also draw on William Pinar's notion of *currere* as a useful framework for guiding this personal practical journey. For more than 30 years, Pinar's curriculum work has influenced curriculum scholars' understanding of the role of lived experiences in shaping curriculum (Pinar, 1975, 2004, 2020; Pinar et al., 1995). Understanding curriculum as an "embodied potentially educational experience that is structured by the past while focused on the future" (Pinar, 2020, p. 50), *currere* offers a methodological approach for examining educational practice and moving toward curricular insight. Both concepts – personal practical knowledge and *currere* – value experiences from the autobiographical past and consider these informative for the future. Pinar's (2020) four phase method of *currere* includes: (a) returning to autobiographical school experiences of the past (regressive phase); (b) imagining the future as it relates to and intertwines with present personal, social, and political dimensions (progressive phase); (c) invoking research, reflection, and study to inform the problem of the present (the analytic phase); and, (d) attaining curricular insight through the coherent synthesis of past, present, and future imaginings (synthetic fourth phase). This inquiry follows the four-phase methodological approach of *currere* to explore a problem made visible by personal practical knowledge, then applies Simpson and Cremin's (2022) concept of the additive trio as an analytic tool to examine the potential of a proposed curricular intervention.

Currere Phase 1: The Autobiographical Past

The first phase of *currere*, the regressive phase, draws on embodied educational experiences in order to inform curricular futures (Pinar, 2020). As I go into the memory of the curricular past, these words arise: “We teach who we are.” This familiar phrase is one I have heard frequently in the world of teaching practice. It’s a phrase I recall from my own Bachelor of Education degree, one that pushed me to reflect on what I already knew and to read more widely in fields where I knew very little. It’s a phrase that now carries deeper ontological connections as I have come to know more about the field of narrative, particularly “*narrative inquiry* as a practice, a way of living our lives” (Clandinin et al, 2015a, p. 24). Narrative inquiry has its origins in a view of individual and social lives as being fundamentally storied. Our lives are grounded in and lived through story, people “shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are,” (Clandinin et al., 2015a, p. 24), and memory helps us “compose the stories of our lives” (Greene, 1978).

As someone who grew up in a small island community, I knew very well who I was in that world. Everyone knew their place. We did not, however, know much about who others were, and grouped them as mainlanders, off-islanders, people from away. While there were few books in my childhood home, they were treasured. We had a regular subscription to the *Reader’s Digest* that had been gifted to our family by a great-grandparent, and family members and teachers fed my love of books. In reading, I sought stories of others to expand my understanding of who I was in a world beyond those shores. The practice of reading to know about the world, to situate myself beyond my own shores, is a familiar one to me. While unsure about my place beyond the island, reading took me into proximity with others I had never met, and provided an alternative script where I might play a role different from the one written for young women in my rural community. Reading made the unfamiliar seem familiar enough to venture into—and so I travelled to a place no one in my family had gone before: university. At university, I encountered people and stories who expanded my worldview and planted the seeds of social justice thinking. Fitting Lehmann’s (2012) description of committed working class students who “generally expressed their hopes for social mobility as emerging from seeing their parents engage in hard physical and sometimes menial labor” (p. 532), I supplemented my scholarship funds through employment, always wanting to read more, but never having enough time (Burston, 2017).

Currere Phase 2: Re-Imagining Literacy for Social Justice

Can a university course that provides opportunities for teacher candidates to encounter stories of themselves and others have the power to create new cultural patterns and support social justice? In examining the personal, social, and political dimensions of the curricular problem of practice, I want to situate equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice through education as a core value for university Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programs nationally. Educators have been called to question how privilege comes at the expense of marginalized peoples, and act in ways that will reduce systemic racism and promote equity in Canada (Association of Canadian Deans of Education, 2020). However, the cultural scripts (Reynolds, 1996) of teachers in Canada illuminate a powerful tradition of middle-class whiteness (McGregor et al., 2015) that calls teacher educators to reimagine

and critically examine the ways in which these scripts are reinscribed in teacher education programming.

Can stories support this re-imagining? Stories, according to Maxine Greene (1978), are fundamental to how we make sense of our world, and our cultural patterns are informed by “previous stories, the ones that we read or were read to us in childhood, studied in school and comprised the canon on which our literary and cultural education was based” (p. 24). As a white, rural, working class-origin female teacher, my cultural script (Reynolds, 1996) contains some similarities to the teacher candidates in the B.Ed program in which I teach, a script that has dominated teacher identity in Canada since the early 1900s – white from a Judeo-Christian background (McGregor et al., 2015). Cultural scripts as a term comes from Cecilia Reynolds (1996), who defines it as the subjectivities available to teachers as we play our part in larger discourses: she argues that teachers can either accept the scripts available or “search for new and better ones” (p. 72). If teachers make sense of the world through “the storylines of their culture” (Davies, 1993, p. 41), then encountering alternative storylines has the potential to broaden the cultural scripts of predominantly white Judeo-Christian, predominantly heterosexual (Reynolds, 1996) teachers as they encounter “counter stories” that challenge dominant narratives (Strong-Wilson, 2007). Teresa Strong-Wilson (2007) has advocated for a critical examination of the stories that shape teachers’ culture, noting that many “of the stories that have been, and are still being made available to children are the same: the same in reproducing whiteness” (p. 121). By this logic, a majority of Canadian teachers from this similar demographic (McGregor et al., 2015) need to read more disruptive and diverse stories in order to broaden their cultural scripts, including myself and many of the teacher candidates I teach. We need to encounter diverse and challenging stories (Burke et al., 2017).

Strong-Wilson (2007) cautions that access to diverse stories is insufficient on its own, and a critical examination of how difference is portrayed, and by whom, can be useful, along with the composition of “stories of confrontation” (p. 124). Drawing on literature that positions white teachers as resistant to social justice education, Strong-Wilson explores stories of confrontation as part of a “project of decolonizing the white subject” (p. 125). A story of confrontation begins with local and autobiographical experiences, places them in relation to stories of and by others, thereby revealing the “interstices produced” (p. 124). Past literary and personal experiences placed alongside counter-stories become an illuminating space where the light of social justice might shine in. As reading and the re-composition of individual stories takes place, cultural scripts can be re-written and, in time, “teaching what we know” becomes more expansive. But where do we find the time for this work in condensed teacher education programs?

Currere Phase 3: Teacher Education and Time, the Analytic Moment

Time as Curricular Commodity

In the third phase of this inquiry, the concept of time is useful to consider in relation to and when reflecting on the problem of practice. Downey and Whitty (2020) explore temporality as a key curriculum construct, noting how temporality, or the subjective experience of time, differs from school time, which is externally dominated by clocking practices. They note that “when clocked curricular time comes up against nonconforming individual, cultural, and natural temporalities, these intersections create tensions,

oppressions, and possibilities” (p. 209). While in a post-degree, 11-month, 60 credit hour teacher education program, there is intensely clocked pressure to condense the multiple curricular components that constitute a robust preparation, academic and professional, for a career in teaching. Time constitutes a limited and valuable concept for containing and deploying the philosophically thoughtful, pedagogically artful, skill-based, knowledge-latent, practice-enabled, certification-driven dimensions of a teacher education program. Outside work obligations can also mean a time deficit for preservice teachers who simply do not have sufficient work and study time (Burston, 2017) for meeting these multiple demands. Curricular time becomes a commodity, traded and budgeted according to categories that are simultaneously imposed from above and competed for from within. For example, at the time I am writing this, there are top-down pressures from government to address a provincial teacher shortage and from university administration to bolster admissions numbers. Beneath this doubled weight, our program must calculate how to graduate more teachers in the same amount of time. These downward pressures tighten the temporal screws holding together our curricular base: where do you find more time to address new curricular challenges?

Time for Change and Challenge

In their discussion of teacher attrition in Canada, Whalen, Majocho, and Van Nuland (2019) briefly allude to diversity as a challenge in Canadian contexts, noting that classrooms:

reflect the microcosm of Canada’s rich and diverse society (Parkay et al., 2017) disclosed through the ‘backgrounds of its people, the visible minority population, linguistic characteristics, and religious diversity’ (Statistics Canada, 2011). The 2016 Canadian Census Report (Statistics Canada, 2016) revealed an immigration number of 7.5 million people which equates to one in five people living in this country. These numbers represent diversity and multiculturalism that will present new challenges within the schools due to the ever-changing demographic population. (p. 593)

While not explicitly linking diversity to teacher attrition, this section of their paper does provoke the question of whether beginning teachers’ cultural scripts position them as unprepared for the contradictions of classroom diversity in a workplace of conformity, where becoming a teacher is perceived as “an adaptation to the expectations and directives of others and the acquisition of pre-determined skills—both of which are largely accomplished through imitation, recitation and assimilation” (Britzman, 1991, p. 29). In his introduction to a recent collection of perspectives on social justice education in Canada, Ali Abdi (2023) emphasizes the need for attention to the “role of schooling and education in assuring the just and viable integration, as opposed to assimilation” (p.1) of new Canadians into an already highly multi-ethnic society. Given these intersecting tensions, curricular time for reckoning with the past and present exclusions in teacher education, and reimagining the assimilating and colonizing legacies of education, should be prioritized.

Teacher Preparation and Curricular Challenges

As a teacher educator, personal practical knowledge obtained through observation over time reveals how teacher candidates enter the program in which I teach with varying levels of confidence and preparation when it comes to literacy education and social justice. In a context where all teachers are considered literacy teachers (Kosnik & Manna, 2013), ensuring that graduating teachers are ready for the role of literacy teacher is a challenging situation, particularly when curricular obligations to meet provincial certification requirements dominate, time in a condensed program is at a premium, and new teachers are not always hired in their area of specialization. Except for French Second Language entrants, our teacher candidates follow a program of study that falls into one of two discrete areas of specialization, or streams: elementary or middle/secondary. The 11-month teacher preparation program is calibrated to align with the 21st Century Standards of Practice for Beginning Teachers (New Brunswick, n.d.) and prepare preservice teachers for practice in the province. Regardless of their stream of study, graduates in our program are certified to teach any grade from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and provincial teacher surpluses and shortages can affect whether beginning teachers are hired to teach in their area of specialization. Currently the province is in a teacher shortage, and recent graduates report being hired to teach grade levels and subjects that do not necessarily align with specialized preparation in their corresponding subject or stream.

Beginning in any new workplace without specialized preparation can be stressful. The first years of teaching are notoriously difficult for new teachers, wherever they begin their careers, and early career teacher attrition is both a national and global issue (Kutsyruba et. al, 2013; Whalen et al., 2019). At the outset of their careers, beginning teachers may not only find themselves in workplaces for which they were not specifically prepared, but also where blending in, maintaining existing structures, and adapting to school culture can be necessary to survive the challenges of being a novice teacher (Britzman, 1991; Reynolds, 1996; Whalen et al., 2019). In a study of early career attrition, Clandinin et al., (2015b) posit the value of stories as a possible intervention for early career teachers at risk of leaving the profession.

Classroom Time and Reading

Two descriptive fragments (Clandinin, 1985) from recent classroom visits raise the issue of reading time as a compelling factor in the consideration of social justice, literature, and equity. The first occurred in a Grade 1 Language Arts classroom, in which I was an observer. No curricular time was devoted to either teacher-led or independent student reading during the Literacy Block. The second occurred in a Grade 8 classroom where the practice was to begin each Language Arts class with 25 minutes of silent reading, and this practice was shared with me by a university supervisor observing a teacher candidate in a practice teaching environment. In the first instance, I was shocked by the absence of reading time, and in the second the university supervisor was aghast that so much time was devoted to reading. By his calculation, in 10 months or 40 weeks of 5 classes a week at 25 minutes a class the calculation would be 5000 minutes, or about 83 hours of reading a year for those Grade 8 students. Despite numerous studies indicating the positive correlation between reading volume and reading proficiency (Allington, 1977, 2009), curricular time for reading is still disputed in practice.

Reading has a long history of being a contested use of curricular time. Whether in university undergraduate courses or K-12 classrooms, the allocation of limited and thereby *premium* classroom-based time for individual reading has been ignored in practice, and contested, scrutinized, or rejected professionally (Armbruster et al., 2001) even though students wish that more class time was allocated to reading (Allred & Cena, 2020). In high stakes accountability contexts, there is a perception that valuable class time should be reserved for replicable, expert-led instruction and tangible, student-generated products that can be uniformly assessed and evaluated against the performance levels of other students, a potentially disenfranchising position (Enriquez, 2013). Individual reading of course-related content is frequently assigned to be done outside of class time, a curriculum decision that would be in step with a National Institute for Literacy directive: “Rather than allocating instructional time for independent reading in the classroom, encourage your students to read more outside of school” (Armbruster et al., 2001, p. 29). The de-prioritizing of premium class time for sustained independent reading both symbolically and actively devalues the act of reading. Rather, curricular time becomes allocated to skills that are economically-linked and globally benchmarked, with the most human of educational pursuits—the arts, music, physical education, etc.—being cut from curricular time (Kimelberg et al, 2019). Rather, standardized assessments are prioritized and utilized as harbingers of academic success and failure, and deployed as neoliberal undergirding for the reallocation of curricular time to employable skills within a global educational marketplace (Sahlberg, 2016).

Devaluing class time for independent reading and literary engagement is disadvantageous for both reader achievement and social justice. There is a direct relationship between reading and academic achievement, and the increased reading proficiency that greater time devoted to reading engenders (Stanovich, 1986). If in-school time is not devoted to reading, school-assigned reading to be done outside of class time assumes that all students have equitable outside of class time. However, time outside of class is not equitably distributed, and therefore cannot be presumed to be an equitable approach (Burston, 2017). Time is a commodity that is limited by socio-economic factors. For young children, inequitable access is complicated by available parental time for trips to the library or work schedules that preclude parents from reading to their children or providing literacy-rich environments. For older students, inequitable access is intensified by after-school employment or family responsibilities that reduce access to time for reading books at home, assuming books are available. These inequities potentially become reproduced at the university level, where the assignment of after-class readings means that the students become further impoverished by a lack of in-class time for reading in a context already marked by a time-deficit (Burston, 2017).

Literature and Social Justice in Curriculum: Reading, Time, and Empathy

Literature is one of the most powerful ways for teachers and students to grapple with difficult questions around social justice and the oppressive, ongoing legacies of injustice. However, beginning teachers do not always exhibit personal literacy practices that ready them for the role of literacy teachers. Aliteracy, or a “lack of reading habit especially in capable readers who choose not to read” (Scott, 1996, p. 195) and declining rates of volitional reading (Simpson & Cremin, 2022), have been met with calls for increased personal reading among current and future literacy professionals (Nathanson et

al., 2008). Reading for pleasure correlates with academic achievement (Zipperer et al., 2002), yet in New Brunswick, where literacy rates are lower than the national average, we have fewer school libraries and teacher-librarians than other provinces, even though these roles are effective supports for the positive reading habits that could lead to better literacy outcomes (APLA, 2013; CUPE, 2019). Inservice teachers are increasingly expected but inadequately equipped to assume the role of school librarians, making specialized preparation in their teacher education programs even more urgent.

Teacher candidates need time to read literature that can support their reading habits, promote the expansion and rewriting of cultural scripts, and activate empathy. Ritivoi (2016) argues that narratives can foster empathy and understanding through encounters with characters who are both similar to or unlike ourselves. Literary empathy (Thexton et al., 2019) can act as a guide and an outcome when exploring consciousness (Sumara et al., 2008), and encountering the emotional terrain of difference (Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Johnston et al., 2006) presented through literature that promotes social justice (Burke et al., 2017). By empathetically taking on the perspectives and feelings of others, we engage in one of the most profound and insufficiently heralded contributions of the deep-reading processes, emphasizing the physiological, cognitive, political, and cultural importance of connecting feeling and thought in the reading circuit of every person (Wolf, 2018). Through individual and collective reading of social justice literature, teacher candidates can encounter critically engaging texts to support their deep-reading processes as well as their personal and professional capacities.

We are in a contemporary moment of curricular contestation that has national and international importance. In Canada, curriculum has historically been influenced from the outside (Chambers, 1999), and our social imaginary is closely linked to the United States. Social justice education supports “full and equal participation from all groups in society” (Sonu, 2020, p. 190). Social justice is a key concept in curriculum (Wearing et al., 2020), and it is currently under threat. Daily news reports and social media feeds from our southern neighbour reveal how efforts to create inclusive educational spaces and expansive curriculum histories that include historically marginalized groups are being met with revisionist exclusion. As backlash against social justice efforts in the United States takes the form of “anti-woke” discourse, it has begun to percolate into the contemporary Canadian curriculum landscape. In Florida, state-sponsored refusals of curriculum interventions that confront difficult knowledge historically obfuscated or ignored by schools are threatening the future of social justice through education. The current refusal of the state of Florida to offer or recognize Advanced Placement classes in African American History (Kim, 2023), and the attempt to erase the presence of queer individuals from educational spaces are just two examples of disturbing setbacks.

Closer to home, a small but vocal group disrupted the annual New Brunswick Teachers’ Association professional development Council Day in the provincial capital. The group of about 15-20 individuals protested a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) presentation offered by the teacher-led group Pride in Education. At the time of this writing, there is ongoing concern in the local teaching community: the government’s response has not been supportive of teachers or Policy 713, which sets “minimum requirements for school districts and public schools to create a safe, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming school environment for all students, families, and allies who identify or are perceived as LGBTQI2S+” (New Brunswick, 2020). Rather, the provincial government

distanced themselves from any support for the SOGI professional learning session, stated that Policy 713 was under review (Moore, 2023), and then revised the policy in a manner that watchdog New Brunswick Child and Youth Advocate asserts violates the rights of children (Ibrahim, 2023). When protective policies and professional learning are under threat from groups who would disrupt social justice efforts, curricular interventions for teacher education are essential. The politicized weaponizing of terms like “woke indoctrination” threatens to displace the dimensions of empathy and inclusion that social justice efforts have been working towards. Educators are caught in this violence: in a gender studies class, a University of Waterloo professor and two students were attacked in a hate-provoked stabbing (Pickel, 2023). Countering this threat requires social justice education, and it “should focus on multidimensional readings and understandings of the historical, political, social, cultural, and linguistic constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions of education and attached possibilities of societal well-being” (Abdi, 2023, p. 2). Allocating curricular time for reading literature that promotes empathy for groups under threat is an actionable practice to promote social justice (Picower, 2012).

Currere Phase 4: The Additive Trio as Synthesis

In a post-graduate teacher education program with competing curricular demands, acting on personal practical knowledge to support preservice teachers’ development as literacy professionals means devising innovative programmatic approaches. Simpson and Cremin’s (2022) review of research on literature and social justice asserts that literature offers affordances in the face of educational inequity and is “a weapon of mindful disruption that can support students’ academic, cultural, social and emotional development” (p. 3). Simpson and Cremin’s concept of the additive trio offers both an analytic tool and pedagogic guide for addressing diminished volitional reading and advancing social justice. The additive trio includes three interrelated dimensions: (a) having a knowledge base of and aesthetic appreciation of children’s literature; (b) experiencing reading both individually and as a social practice; and (c) capacity to use literature as a teaching tool for literacy as social justice. These three dimensions provide an analytic tool in the fourth phase of this curricular inquiry and solidify the conceptual argument for allocating curricular time to reading in support of both literacy and social justice.

Curriculum Design for Social Justice

Canadian literature for social justice has always been a core emphasis of the preservice literacy methods courses I teach, but a process of curricular rethinking inspired by personal practical knowledge supported both literacy and social justice intentions. The process of curricular redesign was informed by four specific contextual factors, drawn from personal practical knowledge.

The first factor relates to the curricular challenge of time. As identified in *currere* phase three, time is a valuable curricular commodity. In the adolescent literacy methods classes I teach, there is already insufficient time for deep, sustained engagement with and ongoing discussion of children’s literature. In my eight-week experiential methods-based courses where preservice teachers engage in micro-teaching and other individual and group presentations, time is already taken up with instructional methods and curriculum content. Furthermore, a governmental increase in the number of preservice teachers in our program this year added to the pressure of time. From a practical perspective, teachers know that

more students logically equals less time for individual instruction and attention. An additional section and an additional number of students per adolescent literacy class means a concomitant reduction in the amount of time I can allocate per teacher candidate to individual conferences, feedback, presentations, grading, and other pedagogical supports. Time for reading in the adolescent literacy course was not feasible, so it had to be found.

In response to the challenge of time, a separate K-12 literature for social justice course was created and added to the curricular offerings for the 2023-2024 academic year. Scheduling the course at a time accessible to all teacher candidates in the program irrespective of their specialization or stream was also a consideration. In the New Brunswick context, B.Ed graduates are certified to teach all grades regardless of program specialization (elementary or middle/secondary). A curricular intervention open to all teacher candidates, not only those whose teachable stream is English Language Arts was warranted, with curricular time for reading part of the design. Time is a necessary component for teacher candidates to be able to read and meaningfully engage with texts both individually and relationally with others, and providing in class time for reading in a separate course specifically devoted to reading social justice literature is arguably a protective factor for the uneven levels of outside of class time available to teacher candidates who have family or employment obligations that can lead to a time deficit (Burston, 2017). An additional time-related design component was that the course not be scheduled in a typical 8-week term, but begin in one term and finish in the next (September to March). Providing access and extended time for deep engagement and ongoing reading in a context that builds respect and empathy through emotional encounters with difference (Picower, 2012; Ritivoi, 2016; Simpson & Cremin, 2022; Thexton et al., 2019) influenced the curricular decision-making.

The second factor involves the instructor's observation of learners and anecdotal feedback received from classroom teachers, district literacy professionals, and teacher candidates regarding a shift in the literacy needs of middle and secondary English learners in the province. This anecdotal feedback aligns with Whalen, Majocha, and Van Nuland's (2019) research that indicates shifting demographics have impacted the composition of local classrooms: diverse languages and literacy levels are changing the dynamics of historically monolingual or bilingual New Brunswick classrooms.

The third is related to beginning teachers whose own cultural scripts (Reynolds, 1996) have not prepared them for diversity (McGregor et al, 2015): beginning teachers need strong pedagogical preparation for contemporary classroom environments, including enriched understanding of how to support English language learners in a context where all teachers are literacy teachers (Kosnik & Manna, 2013).

The fourth factor shares characteristics with the second. Post-pandemic adolescents and their teachers are informally reporting heightened challenges, including the need for additional literacy intervention, mental health, and engagement supports. These anecdotal reports are explored by Aukerman and Aiello (2023) who also address and caution against seeing these needs from a deficit lens. To prepare teacher candidates for the post-pandemic classroom while simultaneously addressing their own teacher identity development, aliteracy, and varying understandings of social justice, focusing specifically on these dimensions also has the potential to be a protective factor against time deficit (Burston, 2017).

Revisiting the Additive Trio

Social justice literature presents powerful promise for responding to the identified problem of practice. Simpson and Cremin (2022) assert that “literature is core to more equitable literacy development” and “has the potential to spark the kind of mindful disruption necessary to shift standardized paradigms of thought, so literacy education should have children’s literature at its heart” (p. 1). They also argue that “for teachers to be adept at improving literacy outcomes through productive adoption and use of literary texts” (p. 1) they must know and appreciate children’s literature, read both individually and as a social practice, and have the capacity to use literature as a teaching tool for literacy as social justice.

Burke, Johnston, and Ward (2017) offer a pan-Canadian view of how literacy teachers can select texts and implement curriculum that promotes understandings of the pedagogical and philosophical issues that arise while teaching for social justice. In their collection, inquiry circles and literature circles provide successful pedagogical approaches to incorporating social justice literature into the Canadian classroom. Components of the circles approach (Daniels, 1994), along with the literature identified by Burke and colleagues (2017), can serve as a guide for curriculum decision-making. Additionally, these practices align with Picower’s (2012) six elements of curriculum design for social justice. Picower’s second element, which aims “to create a climate of respect for diversity by having students learn to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers” (p. 7), and the third element, which involves the exploration of issues of social injustice in both past and present, can be paired with social justice literature.

By coupling curricular time for reading together with Canadian literature for social justice, each of the dimensions of Simpson and Cremin’s additive trio can be met. Teacher candidates can develop a knowledge base of K-12 literature for social justice, have time to read individually and as a social practice, and create curriculum-specific, social-justice based learning plans to foster literacy in the Canadian classroom. By proposing a curricular intervention that integrates social justice perspectives while simultaneously supporting preservice teachers’ personal and professional literacy practices, perhaps all of these teachers will be literacy teachers.

Implications and Next Steps

Not all preservice teachers come to education programs with well-established reading habits or strong background in literature for young people, yet many graduates go on to teach Language Arts or English in their teaching careers. Building on curricular insights derived from the fields of personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), social justice (Abdi, 2023; Picower, 2012), teachers’ cultural scripts (Reynolds, 1996), and children’s literature (Burke et al., 2017), this paper identifies a problem of practice and validates the implementation of curricular time for reading social justice literature.

Through the four-phase method of *currere* (Pinar, 2020) along with a conceptual analysis informed by Simpson and Cremin’s (2022) additive trio, this paper establishes that preservice teachers are in need of academic time devoted to: (a) strengthening their personal and professional literacy practices, (b) developing familiarity with literature that supports their professional practice, (c) expanding their understanding of difference through literary encounters, and (d) deepening their theoretical awareness and practical

understanding of the role of literature in promoting social justice. To address this concern, relational spaces of preservice curriculum time must be created, where teacher candidates can encounter challenging pedagogical moments, and texts for social justice, in an environment that supports positive reading habits and enhances their preparation for the uncertainty of novice professional practice. In class reading time aligns with the additive trio model of responsible reading (Simpson & Cremin, 2022) and elements of curriculum design for social justice (Picower, 2012), and has the potential to support preservice teacher learning about social justice through meaningful literary experiences. Future work on the successes and challenges of the social justice literacy course for all teacher candidates is a next step for this inquiry.

Too often when teachers make instructional or pedagogical changes, the work that goes into those changes is invisible. Which means that when these efforts are undocumented or unpublished, they subsequently run the risk of being hidden, unappreciated, or under-appreciated components of teacher labour. The working drafts of our pedagogical practice remain below-surface portions of the professional iceberg—the hidden narratives of the larger curriculum story where teachers are not just floundering but possibly drowning. By exploding a pedagogical moment of insight, and the curricular journey that it inspires, this paper makes visible the intensive professional work that teachers engage in when making curricular decisions. No matter what stage we are at in our careers, any time we make a shift in our practice, we are drawing on research and the personal practical resources that inform our professional decision-making. As teachers within larger systems, we enter established curricular models or systems, embed ourselves within them, and work toward, with, and sometimes against those models. My intention in this paper was to capture the intensity of this pedagogical and curricular practice, to trace the personal, practical, and professional knowledge that leads educators through the curricular dimensions of reflection and research, all in relation to the learners we encounter, and the hopes we have for them in their educational and personal futures. In documenting this process, the complex decision-making processes that constitute particular curricular redesign efforts are revealed and recorded through *currere* as a curricular inquiry method. Additionally, this inquiry asserts that time for reading social justice literature in class both underscores its value and counteracts an inequitable time deficit. Further, social justice literature can develop preservice teachers' personal and professional reading repertoires, strengthen their personal and professional literacy practices, expand their cultural scripts through literary encounters, and deepen their theoretical awareness and practical understanding of the role of literature in promoting social justice.

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