

## WinkWorld March 2003

Susie Sandretto is a friend, who is now working on her Ph. D. in New Zealand. She and Dawn met in their undergraduate days at UC Davis. They have remained friends, and we all share many professional and personal interests. Suzie is writing about teacher education and social justice. I am sharing the initial couple of pages of the first chapter of her dissertation. If you would like more information, she may be reached at [susan.sandretto@stonebow.otago.ac.nz](mailto:susan.sandretto@stonebow.otago.ac.nz).

Chapter One- Social Justice and Teacher Education  
From the dissertation, in progress, of Susan Sandretto

This project examined the personal beliefs and professional theories and practices of some New Zealand teacher educators in relation to issues of social equity and justice. During the course of this project, participants submitted their beliefs, theories and practices to a form of systematic critical analysis and reflection that was intended to model a form of reflective practice that is often part of teaching and teacher education (e.g. Hatton & Smith, 1995; Loughran, 2002; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). The research questions that provided the focus for the project were:

How do the teacher educators define, problematise and interrogate issues of social equity and justice?

How do the teacher educators become knowledgeable about social equity and justice in their society?

How do they address these issues within their own theorizing and practice?

How do they address these issues in teaching and research in their own school and institution?

The term social justice can be a contested and contentious concept, often loosely defined or not defined at all by some educational researchers and theorists. Fazal Rizvi (1998), an Australian researcher interested in issues of cultural diversity, explained this difficulty:

The immediate difficulty one confronts when examining the idea of social justice is the fact that it does not have a single essential meaning- it is embedded within discourses that are historically constituted and that are sites of conflicting and divergent political endeavors (p. 47).

Rizvi and Carol Christensen (1996) also highlighted the concept that "justice is a highly contested term which can be used in a variety of ways to suit a variety of political interests, [thus] it is impossible to explicated a definitive definition of social justice" (p. 2). Morwenna Griffiths (1998), a British feminist philosopher, notes that " 'social justice' is a term which does not mean the same to everyone who uses it" (p. 3). This chapter examines commonly used conceptions of social justice and their philosophical underpinnings, connections between social justice and the New Zealand educational context and lastly, connections between social justice and teacher education.