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DEMOCRACY CAMP FOR TEACHERS: CROSS-CULTURAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PREPARING EDUCATORS TO CREATE SOCIAL JUSTICE-MINDED CITIZENS

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ABSTRACT

The Civitas Democracy Camp for Teachers provides professional development for educators to collaboratively explore ideals of citizenship and citizenship education in democratic societies. Reported herein are the findings of a study of the camp experience of a cross-cultural group of educators who examined the concept of social justice and ways to teach their students about it. Results of the study indicate that the participants broadened their definitions of social justice, expanded their recognition of the importance of teaching about social justice, and enhanced their understandings of approaches for teaching about social justice. Further, the findings indicate that cross-cultural professional development can have positive effects in altering and expanding educators' content and pedagogical knowledge of important international issues such as social justice.

INTRODUCTION

If a goal of schools is to heighten the propensity of students to become participatory citizens who are social justice-minded activ-

ists that desire equality of all citizens of the world, teachers must be trained how to educate students in ways that promote the cognitive and participatory skills they will need to act as informed and capable change agents in their communities. For schools to empower students with the tools needed for recognizing, naming, analyzing, and confronting the most acute social conditions in the world today, teachers must be provided the wisdom and finesse needed to convince young people that a more equitable world is a better world, and that if they work to make it so, the world and the social condition of all who live in it can be better. For this type of teaching to occur, teachers must possess a depth and breadth of knowledge in the definitions and themes of social justice, and they must know how to effectively infuse issues of social justice into their curricula (White, 2008).

To these ends, professional development that affords teachers opportunities to consider and explore issues of social justice and time to plan for ways to teach about social justice in effective fashion are needed. In addition, introducing teachers to the broader realities of social injustice and the challenges of achieving social justice throughout time and place can be an effective approach to helping them understand the concept of social justice in clearer or more precise ways. While much research has been conducted concerning the effects of professional development at local, state, and national levels, a review of the literature suggests that limited research has been performed on the impact of international, inter-cultural professional development. The study described herein provides insights into the form and substance of one such professional development and its impact in expanding teachers' understanding of social justice and their confidence and competence in planning to teach about it.

THE FOSTERING OF SOCIAL JUSTICE-MINDEDNESS: A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The concept of what a society considers to be just has, since antiquity, fascinated and oftentimes perplexed philosophers, politicians, and educators alike. Plato rebuked the young Sophist, Thrasymachus, for asserting that justice was whatever the strongest decided it would be. In 1840, the term social justice was coined by a Sicilian priest, and since that time, scholars and citizens have labored

to understand the construct and to see it achieved. As suggested by Lewis (2001), "Social justice involves exploring the social construction of unequal hierarchies, which result in a social group's differential access to power and privilege" (p. 189). As the humanity of the world, the demographics of the countries of the world, and the societal microcosms of mankind that coexist continue to become increasingly diverse and pluralistic in nature, educating the citizenry about unjust social structures, practices, and institutions becomes an even greater imperative. Institutions of education must prepare students not only to understand the construct of social justice, but they must equip students to become the type of citizens who can and will strive to help make social justice a reality for all. Schools have an obligation to educate students in ways that promote the common good, social action, and positive societal transformation. Schools must fulfill this obligation and equip students to become social justice-minded citizens so the overarching mission of public education, which is to "build a more democratic and just society" (Sehr, 1997, p. 166), can be achieved.

Efforts in education to achieve these aims have included provisions for multicultural education; focused attention on critical matters of equity and diversity; and engendered sensitivity toward the intricacies of race-, ethnicity-, and gender-specific issues. These targeted initiatives have clouded together in meaning for teachers as they seek to train and send forth a more enlightened democratic citizenry. Embedded in the meaning derived by teachers is an expressed need to more clearly understand the concept of social justice and transformative pedagogies that can be used to effectively teach about social justice issues. As Jones, Webb, and Neumann (2008) proposed, teachers must engage students in the issues of inequity that continue to plague societies around the world, and teachers must also recognize that an important component of teaching about social justice is the teaching and nurturing of democratic sentiments. According to Nagda, Gurin, and Lopez (2003), democratic sentiments can be defined as "the ability to think actively and structurally about people's behaviors and social issues, to understand the perspectives of other people, and to think about actions to resolve inter-group conflicts" (p. 166). The teaching of these sentiments equips students in ways that enable them to understand and respond to social problems that have historically plagued and that continue to plague literally every society of peoples on earth. Such

teaching requires imparting the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by students to see the world as it truly is and how it might ideally be.

Students who experience this type of education will be more inclined to become the type of citizens described by Mathews (1996), the type of citizens that embrace diverse perspectives and peoples and the type that has “the ability to keep an open mind, to stand in another person’s shoes, to change, and to make decisions with others” (p. 275). This type of citizenship education is more likely to enhance development of the habits of thought necessary to recognize, challenge, and reject discrimination, marginalization, and oppression and to develop among students what Rodgers (2006) described as “a willing accountability for changing their world” (p. 1266). Citizenship education that prepares young people to accept this responsibility and to consciously make the connection between social justice-mindedness and effective democratic citizenship holds promise for meeting its full potential, which, as articulated by Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997), is to “prepare citizens who are sophisticated in their understanding of diversity and group interaction, able to evaluate social institutions critically, and committed to working democratically with diverse others” (p. xv).

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY CAMP FOR TEACHERS

The Education for Democracy Act, authorized by the U.S. Congress, provides funding through the U.S. Department of Education for Civitas: An International Civic Education Exchange Program. Civitas partnerships exist between and among 30 U.S. states and 26 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In addition, the program conducts special projects in an estimated 50 other countries. Goals for the Civitas program were established by the Center for Civic Education with the enhancement of civic education as the program’s primary mission. Through the various partnerships and special projects, the Civitas program facilitates opportunities for civic educators and civic leaders to collaborate with one another, to learn from one another, and to support one another in improving education for democracy in their respective homelands.

During the years since the establishment of a partnership between Florida, Texas, Mississippi, Hungary, and Romania, cross-cultural relationships have developed among gatekeepers of de-

mocracy in and between each of the partnering sites. The partnership activities have been collaborative in nature with the mutual aim being to educate and learn from one another. In keeping with the goals of the program, professional development opportunities have been made available to educators from each of the five partner sites; lesson plans on historical and comparative topics have been written and distributed for use in each site; student-centered academic events have been staged at each site; professional exchanges have taken place between and among the various sites; and finally, research has been conducted to ascertain the needs and impact of civic education-related activities in the participating regions.

With a mission of educating for democracy and a belief that quality civic education is the single most critical contributor to the founding, nurturing, and continued advancement of democratic societies, members of the Florida-Texas-Mississippi-Hungary-Romania partnership have dedicated their resources to developing and providing exemplary curricula materials and intensive professional development opportunities to those who serve on the front lines of civic education – the teachers. In support of these outcomes, the partnership has sponsored a series of Education for Democracy summer camps that have rotated among the European and U.S. partner sites. In the early years of the camp, students, along with a small number of teacher-chaperones, were invited to attend the camp. Ultimately, however, the decision was made to target teachers alone, with the rationale being that providing a week of intensive professional development to educators exclusively can have a multiplying effect, one not realized through the student camps, when the educators returned to their respective classrooms.

On the occasion of one such Education for Democracy Camp held in Mississippi, the purpose of the camp was to provide participants from each partner site an opportunity to convene for one week to explore, discuss, analyze, and debate challenges and opportunities inherent in educating today's youth for citizenship in democratic societies. The camp was attended by 28 educators, 22 as participants and six as camp facilitators; 23 of the participants were teachers from Florida, Texas, Mississippi, Hungary, and Romania. The remaining five participants were educators from Panama and Peru, countries partnered with Florida in a separate Civitas partnership. Camp facilitators included content specialists, classroom teachers, and teacher educators. This model of continuing pro-

professional development was adopted because of the success it has shown in transforming classroom practice (Eaton & Carbone, 2008). The camp provided large group, small group, and independent study activities to the participants. Throughout the week, cultural and educational excursions were also made available to the group, including visits to government agencies, museums of history, and a university research center.

In order to allow for meaningful depth of study and reflective thought by the camp participants, the scope of the civic education-related topics addressed during the week was narrowed to three key concepts, one of which was the concept of social justice. The goal of the camp was to meet a challenge identified by Kose (2007), which is to provide "professional development that encourages teachers to prepare students as citizens who understand and address community, national, and global social issues" (p. 35). Additionally, the camp activities were designed to foster an awareness of the important role, as articulated by Wade (2004), that teachers play in creating social justice-minded citizens who take action to improve their local communities as well as the world. The experiences provided to the educators were designed to increase both their knowledge and understanding of the concept of social justice as well as their competence and comfort in teaching about topics related to the concept. The camp afforded the educators time to reflect and collaborate on ways to best equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed to become social justice-minded citizens. Readings that addressed the concept of social justice and its teaching were provided to the participants at the beginning of the week. The unifying theme of the readings posited the teaching of social justice issues as being central to educating students for citizenship in a democratic society. The readings also presented persuasive arguments for developing a social justice philosophy of teaching (Duncan-Andrade, 2005); adopting student-empowering social justice pedagogy (Dickie, 2003); utilizing creative ways to teach about diversity, prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance (McCall, 2004); fostering inclusive classroom and school climates (Sapon-Shevin, 2003); and identifying historical and present-day instances of civil and human rights violations around the world (Simon, 2002).

After reading the selections provided and discussing the issues and suggestions encountered in the readings, the educators

attended a lecture conducted by a state Supreme Court justice who possesses extensive knowledge of the U.S. legal system and the history of civil rights struggles by African-Americans in the U.S. Two pivotal historical realities that exist in democratic societies were identified by the justice. The first reality was the critical role of the legal system in effecting social change. An example of this reality included the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Oliver L. Brown et.al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka (KS) et.al.* The speaker provided a historical perspective of the profound impact the court case had on the social development of the U.S., as it effectively dismantled the legal basis for racial segregation in public schools and other public facilities.

The second reality identified in the lecture was the equally important role of social action as a precursor to legal action that results in societal change. An example cited was the historic 1963 March on Washington, D. C., when an estimated 200,000 people congregated at the Lincoln Memorial and heard Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The Mississippi Supreme Court justice pointed out that the social action taken that day by the citizens at the podium and those in the crowd led the U.S. Congress to pass both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the National Voting Rights Act of 1965. These two landmark pieces of federal legislation outlawed racial discrimination in schools, housing, hiring, and voting in the U.S., and the social consequences of these governmental actions were immediate and sweeping.

Following the justice's lecture, participants took an excursion to a historical museum that displayed powerful images and accounts of civil and human rights violations of African-Americans in the U.S. during the 19th and 20th centuries. A historian at the museum provided insights into the profound impact the overt acts of hate and discrimination had on the public consciousness and legal system of the nation as a whole. Large group informal question and answer sessions followed the lecture and excursion.

Throughout the week, the readings, content lectures, question and answer sessions, and large group discussions served as springboards to topical, hands-on, and interactive small group activities that were facilitated by the classroom teachers and teacher educators who served as camp mentors. All of the activities engaged the participants in ways that required them to identify and consider issues and problems related to teaching about social justice. Working

together in cross-cultural groups that were mediated by the camp mentors, the educators investigated the differences and similarities in the issues and problems that were brought to the table for consideration. As they reflected on and shared personal knowledge of or experiences with occurrences of race-, ethnicity-, gender-, and religion-based discrimination in the various partner sites, the educators came to an awareness of both the commonalities and the differences of the instances of social injustice in the stories they told. It was through these personal and candid storytelling sessions of both historical and present-day acts of social injustice that they defined topics around which lesson plans could be collaboratively developed. The teachers resolved to develop universal lessons that could be used to teach about social justice in all of the sites represented by the camp participants.

After considering the varying frames of reference held by the individual group members, each group reached consensus on issues around which they would write lesson plans to use in their classrooms upon their return home. An emphasis was placed upon the need for the lessons to connect the importance of social justice-mindedness to the tasks inherent in holding the office of citizen in a democracy. A set of six lesson plans were developed by the educators. Each plan focused on one or more topics related to the concept of social justice. Topics highlighted in the plans included fairness, justice, injustice, equal opportunity, stereotyping, and peaceful co-existence. The educators resolved that to help their students understand the gravity of the topics, it would be necessary to have them examine examples of social inequality, to include instances of extreme social injustice around the world throughout time. Examples suggested included the treatment of Japanese-Americans in the U.S. during World War II and the genocide of the Jewish population in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe. It was also determined by the camp participants that students should be required to examine various representations of social injustice as depicted in historical and contemporary literature, pictures, art, history, political propaganda, and audio recordings.

The participants spent several hours throughout the week collaborating in their cross-cultural groups and reaching agreement on lesson objectives, instructional procedures, and resources that would be needed to execute the lessons. As a culminating activity, each group presented their lessons to the large group on the last

day of the camp and detailed the collaboration and reflection that took place as the topics were selected and the lessons were crafted. Each camp participant was provided a complete collection of the lessons developed by all of the groups, and the educators were given the charge to return to their respective classrooms and use the lessons as the basis of a teaching unit on social justice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The camp participants were selected through a competitive application process. Individuals were chosen to attend based on their statements of interest in attending the camp, their teaching experience and assignments, and recommendations from their school administrators. In order to achieve a balance in numbers of participants from the partner sites, the applicants' geographic homeland was also factored into the selections. The teachers who attended the camp were immersed in a plethora of professional development activities that were purposely selected to provide the participants experiences that allowed them to gain a greater understanding of issues related to social justice and opportunities and challenges for teaching about those issues. In order to measure and evaluate the outcomes of the camp, survey research was conducted throughout the week. Pre- and post-surveys were conducted of all camp participants. The survey protocols included questions that centered on four primary areas of inquiry: (a) definitions of social justice, (b) explicit teaching about social justice, (c) implicit teaching about social justice, and (d) prioritization of the importance of teaching about social justice.

Data analysis consisted of examining the open-ended responses penned by the participants using inductive analysis (Patton, 1990). The initial analysis of the responses sought to identify and interpret notable changes across the geographically designated groups (i.e., U.S. participants, European participants, and Central and South American participants), between the groups, and within the groups in each of the four areas of inquiry that guided the lines of questioning. Next, the techniques of coding and content attribution analysis (Janis, as cited in Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) were utilized to extrapolate themes that emerged from the study. Site-specific matrices and an across-groups meta-matrix were used for the between-groups and within-groups analyses.

RESULTS

In the first line of inquiry on the pre-survey, the participants were asked to explain what the term social justice meant to them. On the pre-survey, definitions written by the European members of the camp dealt with fairness and the notion that social justice is a value of society. Their definitions also alluded to social justice as being a basic need of a community so that all people can live together in a respectful way. Terms such as obligation and opportunity were used. The Central and South American camp members' definitions focused on equality and fairness and mentions were made of taking action and helping. The Americans wrote about the need for laws and equality for all. They also used terms like minorities and accountability, and they were the only group to mention healthcare and education as issues specific to social justice.

In response to the post-survey question "Has your definition of social justice changed? If so, how?" the majority of the participants, 59%, felt their definitions had become more informed. Open-ended responses included references across all of the groups to the importance of citizen participation; the need to balance rights and responsibilities; the role of education in promoting social justice; and consideration of issues specific to race, class, and gender. Strikingly, a number of the respondents stated that their definitions had expanded to include ideas and issues formerly unfamiliar to them.

In the second line of questioning, participants were questioned about the explicit teaching of social justice in their classrooms. Across the groups, 47% of the teachers said they explicitly taught about social justice prior to the camp. This number increased significantly to 81% on the post-survey. Between the groups there were generally equal gains; however, the Europeans showed slightly more change. The within-groups analysis revealed that the teachers from Mississippi experienced the greatest change.

The third line of research addressed the implicit teaching of social justice. On the pre-survey, 80% of the participants indicated they implicitly taught the concept but that number fell to 74% on the post-survey. This slight decrease was likely the result of the participants' determination to be more explicit in their teaching about the concept following the camp. There were no notable differences between or within the groups in this line of inquiry.

Interesting comments were made by the teachers when they were asked to identify social justice-related topics they would, as a result of their Democracy Camp experience, teach in the future. In order of frequency of occurrence, the terms identified by the Europeans included fairness, freedom, human rights, justice, injustice, equality, and happiness. Topics listed by the Central and South Americans were justice, equality, injustice, fairness, and cooperation. The American group's topics were equality, tolerance, poverty, justice, peace, freedom, choice, opportunity, and order.

In the final line of inquiry, the group was asked to rank the level of importance in teaching about social justice. Responses on the pre-survey showed that 68% of the participants placed a moderate level of importance on the concept, while 22% ranked social justice with a high level of importance. These percentages shifted to 30% for moderate and 70% for high on the post-survey. The between-groups analysis found that the U.S. and Central and South American participants showed greater increases than the Europeans, and a within-groups analysis showed the Panamanians and Mississippians to have experienced the most change.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study described herein both confirm and extend the findings of previous studies of cross-cultural professional development opportunities for teachers. Similar to the other studies that have examined the effects of international teacher education workshops, projects, and exchange experiences (Gu, 2005; Jiang & DeVillar, 2005; Sanchez, Araujo, & O'Donnell, 2008; Yan, 2008), it can be concluded from this research that cross-cultural professional development initiatives have the potential to impact teacher development in significant and positive ways. Specifically, in the case of the Democracy Camp, the survey data, together with anecdotal insights gleaned by the camp facilitators throughout the week, indicated that the international professional development experience expanded the participants' definitions of social justice, led them to recognize social justice as a multi-faceted construct, and expanded their knowledge of issues related to teaching about social justice. As a result of their camp experience, the participants articulated deeper understandings of what social justice is and how it can be approached and taught in their classrooms, and they came to de-

fine the concept with a greater scope, specificity, and depth than they did before the camp experience.

While on the pre-surveys, the educators' definitions of social justice diverged as they appeared to draw from their individual cultural heritages and perceptions (e.g., the historically rooted European attentiveness to obligation and the American modern-day focus on healthcare and education), the post-survey responses revealed a shift toward a mutual and collective understanding of the broader intricacies of issues related to social justice, particularly as they pertain to citizenship education. This was evident in the new and shared terms used by the educators to describe what they would teach their students upon their returns home as well as in their articulations of their intentions to use more explicit teaching practices when teaching about social justice. The teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge as they relate to teaching about social justice were together positively impacted, and, moreover, their confidence and competence in planning for teaching about social justice were also positively affected.

Secondly, the research findings also revealed that the educators came to a greater recognition of the importance of preparing students to become social justice-minded citizens who are advocates for human, minority, civil, and equal rights. Incidental and anecdotal evidence gathered during the week demonstrated a general increase in willingness among the educators to facilitate lessons in their classrooms that more directly and more comprehensively address issues of social justice as they relate to democratic aspirations and ideals. The participating educators resolved to return to their respective schools and classrooms and utilize the lesson plans developed during the camp, lesson plans that were deliberately created to allow for adaptations to suit the context of each teacher's school and community culture and student population. The participants articulated a shared desire to impart an understanding to their students of the need for citizens living in democratic societies to recognize the realities of social injustices perpetuated on minority peoples all around the world and, further, to support the cause of social justice for all. This shared desire developed organically as the camp participants came, through discussion and other active learning camp experiences, to mutual realizations of the markedly different and yet strikingly similar issues of social justice that have prevailed across time in each of their homelands. This altered

awareness resembled what Nelson (2008), in the study of a cross-cultural professional development experience of Canadian and Kenyan educators, described as a deeper level of wakefulness.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, a critical revelation made during the camp was the extent to which the respective cultural experiences and lenses of the participants impacted their thinking about social justice issues. The learning of the participants was inextricably framed by the social and cultural contexts they each brought to the camp experience, an occurrence that Henschke (2005) posited as being universal among adult learners. When discussing their knowledge and perceptions of social injustice, the educators from Mississippi readily identified with political and social wrongdoings committed against African-Americans in the U.S., most particularly in their own state. The Mississippians were, however, generally unaware of and genuinely perplexed by parallels that emerged in discussions of strikingly similar social, economic, and political atrocities perpetuated upon the Roma populations of Central and Eastern Europe. Remarkably, it proved difficult for the Mississippi teachers to see past the Civil Rights Movement to comparable violation of the rights of other groups of peoples in other places. Similarly, while the participants from Texas and Florida readily acknowledged an awareness of issues of social justice as they pertain to Hispanic immigrant peoples that today populate their states, the issues of broader immigration issues in Europe and Central and South America were generally unfamiliar to them. In many ways, it became apparent that within the geographically designated participant groups, overtones of the culture-bounded life experiences of the camp participants colored their beliefs, values, and attitudes held on matters related to educating for democracy and very specifically with respect to matters of social justice.

The success of the Civitas Education for Democracy Camp for Teachers can likely be attributed in large part to the Camp's adherence to five of the six research-based characteristics of effective professional development as identified by Guskey and Kwang (2009). Specifically, the Camp (1) followed a summer institute model that included active learning experiences for the participants; (2) involved outside experts who addressed teachers directly on the focus topics of study; (3) required the participants to be involved in more than 30 hours of well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused instruction on both content and pedagogy;

(4) included activities that were grounded in content, process, and context; and (5) focused on the development of subject-related content development and pedagogic practices. While the Camp also attempted to include the sixth characteristic of effective professional development (i.e., follow-up), the vast geographic distances of the teachers involved in the study proved to be an insurmountable challenge to accomplishing meaningful follow-up activities with the participants. Still, the findings of the study strongly indicate that the international cross-cultural learning opportunity yielded positive effects in altering and expanding the content and pedagogical knowledge of the educators, and, moreover, the camp experience enhanced their understanding of and confidence and competence in planning to teach about social justice.

CONCLUSION

In today's shrinking world, education for democracy must include perspectives on issues of social justice that range from local to national to international communities, both in terms of understandings of social justice issues and approaches for teaching about the issues. If young people are to be well prepared for assuming the office of citizen in a democratic society, it is the responsibility of schools to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to become the type of citizens that embraces the diversity of humanity, recognizes the vast array of social justice issues that exist in communities around the world, and promotes social justice for all. For teachers to successfully educate students to acquire such knowledge and skills and assume such responsibilities, targeted professional development opportunities are essential. Such opportunities, like Democracy Camp, must provide educators with experiences that engage them in collaborative study in and thought about social justice issues and approaches to integrating social justice issues into their curricula.

In unique and powerful ways, the Education for Democracy Camp provided this type of professional development to educators from the U.S., Europe, and Central and South America. The cross-cultural design of the camp extended extraordinary opportunities for collaboration to the camp participants. Beginning with intense examinations of social justice issues and culminating with the cross-cultural, collaborative planning of lessons, the camp partici-

pants broadened their definitions of social justice, enhanced their understandings of approaches for teaching about social justice, and expanded their recognition of the importance of teaching about social justice in their classrooms. The sum of the data collected throughout the week leads to the conclusion that the overall goals of the camp were met. The participants emerged from the camp more knowledgeable about social justice issues and with greater comfort and confidence in their abilities to teach about social justice. Consequently, teaching about social justice will be enhanced in the classrooms of the Democracy Camp participants, and students in the U.S., Europe, and Central and South America will be the primary beneficiaries of the camp's success.

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