Publications

9-8-2020

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The Evolution of Social Justice in International Higher Education

AARON CLEVENGER

Any study of social justice must begin with the question: Who has the right to govern others? Said another way, Do you have the right to wield power over me? Is there some form of superior strength, trait, or intelligence that would make one person more of a leader than others? Do these perceived strengths manifest through race, age, sexual orientation, gender, or other characteristics? Or is there a feature in all human life and in the abilities and differences in each of us that make anyone capable of leading others, or at least determining our own fate?

Working to answer these deeply complex issues gives rise to many other questions: How does one lead fairly? Whose sense of fairness should people follow? Are there such things as universal ethics that we each should, or even could, agree on? Over the years, there have been lived experiments in governance, like democracy and socialism, which have been accepted by the governed; while other forms of oppression, like chattel slavery and totalitarianism, have been brutally forced upon generations of individuals. History is full of examples of the powerful imposing themselves on those perceived to be less powerful, less educated, less wealthy, less pious, or less capable.

It is this history and debate over who has the right to rule over others from which social justice was originally born (Burke 2011). While many people today believe that social justice was formed out of religious teachings, it can be argued that it actually has its beginnings in the modern day concept of political security (Jackson 2005; Brodie 2007). This chapter provides an overview of the history of social justice, its relationship with higher education,

key terminology surrounding the discourse, and the impact of educational activities and experiential learning.

History of Social Justice

In 1843, Jesuit philosopher Luigi Taparelli d'Azeglio coined the concept of social justice as part of what Burke (2011) describes as his desire to convince the people of Italy that there was no such thing as equality in terms of governance. Burke (2011) argues that Taparelli believed that there was a divine and natural need for an aristocratic class. Taparelli penned his opus, *Saggio teoretico di dritto natural*, during the debate over the future political standing of Italy in the mid-1800s, just after the Napoleonic War. The chief question of the debates became whether Italy would remain as multiple separate kingdoms or would form one unified government. Taparelli, a devout Catholic, worked to develop a philosophy of politics that kept the Pope and Catholicism at the center of power, while his rival philosophers of the day, John Locke and Adam Smith, advocated for governances built on liberalism and free market capitalism, respectively.

According to Behr (2003), in espousing this Catholic-centered authority, Taparelli found himself at deep odds with Locke's concept of the governed being in a contract with those who govern them. Taparelli believed that there was a divine province and a divinely chosen ruling class. He thought that, whether by wealth, education, or strength, this class of people should naturally be able to rule over others. He was convinced of the idea of a "social justice" where those who had the power to bring about stability should rule over those who were unable to bring about stability. Taparelli believed in a concept of "natural authority," which posits that all men were naturally equal but that the application of a person's choices provides him or her with a different and unequal path. He philosophized that choices made some people wealthy and powerful and made others subject to those with that power. Burke (2011), an ardent critic of social justice, draws attention to the paradox of Taparelli being the founder of social justice, pointing out that Taparelli's form of social justice was a defense of inequality and extreme conservatisms.

Instead of rejecting this concept, the Catholic Church, under the influence of Pope Leo XIII, Cardinal Tommaso Maria Zigliara, and others, eventually transformed the concept into a more centralist approach. During Pope Leo XIII's papacy, Cardinal Zigliara composed the *Rerum novarum*, and the teachings of social justice moved away from pure politics into a more modern philosophy, stating that the role of the state is to protect and promote the rights of its citizens. Through the *Rerum novarum*, the Catholic Church adopted the idea that God is on the side of the poor and the working man rather than the rich and the greedy. This philosophy went as far as to condemn many of the practices of capitalism and advocated for the need for trade unions and collective bargaining. Concurrently, the Catholic Church pivoted to a more biblical message of helping the less fortunate, the infirm, the less educated, and the poor. Guided by the belief that humans are divinely judged by their acts of charity and faith, the Catholic Church transformed the concept of social justice into a responsibility that asked those who had been blessed with more to provide for those with less. The church pointed to the concept of Jesus and his acts in caring for those that society had abandoned as God's example of how society should act toward one another.

Social Movements of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

As the world emerged from World War I, social justice became more secular in its aims against injustice. During this time, a number of social movements developed, including the fight for the needs and concerns of the working class (Waites 1976), protections against child labor (Cox 1999), the initial adoption of women's suffrage (Hume 2016), and the earliest beginnings of the fight for equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals (Bullough 2002).

As World War II came to an end, the civil rights movement in the United States rose in national prominence. During this time, the concepts of racial hierarchy, social Darwinism, and Aryanism—previously held as mainstream beliefs throughout Europe and the United States—fell out of favor thanks, in part, to their association with Nazism. However, despite scientifically disproving White supremacy and the idea of any superior race, violence, segregation, and hatred continued, especially in the United States and South Africa.

To battle these racially motivated injustices, numerous leaders in the African American community during the 1950s and 1960s led marches, boycotts, and peaceful protests in an attempt to make real progress and change in the lives of African Americans and the politics of the United States. Beginning then and progressing into the 1980s, leadership from Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, among others, fought to end the evils of the ferocious violence, segregation, and discrimination against "non-Whites" under the apartheid laws of the South African Afrikaners. While much progress has been made in the areas of civil rights and racial equality, many radical racist theories and behaviors have transformed over the years from overt mainstream beliefs and laws to a more covert form of systematic and institutional racism.

In conjunction with the fight for social and political equality, civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy began to demand economic and human rights for the poor, regardless of race. As these civil rights leaders made direct connections between poverty and inequality, they enabled others to take action. Another champion of the day was Michael Harrington, a political theorist and member of Dr. King's National Advisory Committee. Harrington, author of *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (1962), made the argument that poverty was no longer temporary for people; it had become a permanent state of being that was inherited from one generation to the next, becoming systematically engrained into the lives of many within the United States and the other global north countries of the world. Harrington's text became so influential that it is often credited as a major influence on U.S. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Harrington's text and the civil rights movement are both cited as leading to Johnson's 1964 War on Poverty (Heise 1989; Isserman 2009; Matthews 2014).

Building on the principles of those major events, John Rawls's (1971) *A Theory of Justice* criticizes the widening gap between the rich and the poor and calls for a Locke-like contract between the government and the people, guaranteeing all individuals their basic human rights. Rawls (1971) espoused the idea that the poor must be given the opportunity to work, and the notion that the government owes its people the ability to afford and/or receive free health care and education. Critics and proponents alike began to see social justice as an

economic philosophy that calls for the rich to pay a representative percentage of taxes, that income and wealth should be distributed, and that all citizens should benefit from one another's labor.

Social Justice Today

Too often, the first lesson in teaching social justice requires that it be demystified, redefined, and explained, absent from the political jargon it has been assigned. As an administrator in international education and an adjunct professor in both ethics and global studies, I find that my students often misunderstand what social justice is and why it is important to society. I have seen students become defensive, skeptical, and even angry on occasion. These emotions seem to emerge from the perception that social justice is somehow a desire that seeks to forcibly redistribute the wealth, opportunities, and privilege of the rich. In reframing social justice, it is important to define it as a concept of human rights and equality that requires the removal of systematic barriers that prevent individuals from succeeding and meeting their full potential. It is this concept of equality of opportunity that social justice stands for today.

TERMINOLOGY

While it is essential that students understand that social justice is not simply moving wealth from one person or class of people to another, it is also vital that they recognize and accept that there is a universal need for equality and opportunity for all people. In order to teach the concepts of social justice, equality, and opportunity, either in a traditional classroom setting or in a more hands-on experiential environment, we must define and understand a number of terms. I have narrowed the terms to 10. While my list is by no means comprehensive, I have found these terms to be essential for student comprehension if they are to truly grasp the concept of social justice.

- Prejudice: an assumed belief or judgment about a culture or a group of people.

- Discrimination: an intentional or unintentional action against a person or a group of people based upon one's prejudiced beliefs about that person or group.

- Power: the ability to control, influence, or direct the action of others with or without their permission or despite their resistance to one's control or influence.

- Oppression: exercising unjust or cruel power over another person or group of people.

- Equity: a state of being where all people or a group of people are afforded access to and the correct amount of necessary resources to achieve equal results as the dominant group.

- Privilege: social, legal, and institutional rights and power afforded to someone merely because of the person's membership in one or more social identity groups; in the U.S context, these would include White people, able-bodied people, heterosexuals, males, Christians, cis-gender persons, and those people who speak English as their first language.

- Systematic Barriers: written or unwritten, spoken or unspoken policies, practices, and procedures that create unequal challenges or limit access to opportunity.

- Culture: the norms, values, customs, terminology, laws, religion, institutions, and social groups of a people.

- Socialization: the lessons and behaviors one learns in order to conform to and understand a particular culture; family, friends, cultural influences, and personal experiences, which often influence one's socialization.

- Peacebuilding: nonviolent activities undertaken to resolve injustices caused by violence, deadly conflict, or destructive behaviors.

While the definitions above are a compilation that I have developed over the years, they have been inspired by Sensoy and DiAngelo's (2017) *Is Everyone Really Equal?* Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) informed not only my thinking around the essential terminology and definitions applied, but also the

examples, stories, and analogies I use in class and in the field. As one begins to teach or facilitate social justice curriculum, one will likely find it essential to become familiar with other terminology, like the lexicon surrounding gender, sexuality, and disability scholarship and research.

Social Justice and Higher Education

Higher education, like social justice, has changed and transformed over time, becoming what Karaca (2018) labeled the "Third Generation University," comprising institutions of academics, research, and innovation. In considering U.S. higher education, Thelin (2011) points to a number of historical moments that have led to the transformation of the academy from a curriculum reflecting colonial vocations and values to a more holistic and modern pedagogy. The passage of the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges Acts of 1862 and 1890 and the founding of schools for women, historically Black colleges and universities for the descendants of former enslaved African Americans, and other institutions that serve minority students are two examples of this shift. The transformation is further demonstrated by Columbia College's 1919 introduction of the Core Curriculum and the G.I. Bill. These examples represent only some of the laws and social movements that have helped transform U.S. higher education from its purpose of educating young, White men to the current ambitious vision for U.S. higher education.

Today, the public expects higher education to produce useful research that benefits society in a tangible way, improve the economic future of its graduates, and, in turn, enhance the communities in which the graduates live and work. In the United States, higher education is an important vehicle for class and social mobility. It is this aspect that has led some higher education institutions to prioritize social justice as an important aspect of the curriculum. These institutions advocate for the idea that, in order to produce educated individuals and future responsible leaders, their students must be able to understand their place within the world while also acknowledging what systematic barriers prevent individuals from succeeding and meeting their full potential; this has not always been the belief, even among academics.

Theories and Concepts

Bennett (2010) points out in his consequential chapter "A Short Conceptual History of Intercultural Learning in Study Abroad" that before the World Wars, society, including academia, was mired in the history of European colonialism and still advocated and endorsed the theory of social Darwinism. Many educated individuals still believed in concepts such as Eugenics (Dikötter 1998) and a hierarchy of cultures ranging from what was labeled "the savage to the civilized" (Kenny 2015, 176). With these ethnocentric beliefs came the imperialistic concept that the "global north" needed to either control or save the people of the uneducated and barbarous communities of the "global south."

Not wanting to continue the normalization of these racist concepts, anthropologists like Frank Boas and his students began debunking these erroneous and specious beliefs and instead espoused the concept of cultural relativism (Tilley 2007). Cultural relativism is the belief that a culture should not be judged through the lens of another person's culture, but that it must be experienced and understood through direct exposure to the culture and must be understood on its own terms (Bennett 2010). In this way, cultural relativism can be seen as the original goal of international education and one of the first consequential intersections of social justice and international education.

International Exchanges

In conjunction with the rise of cultural relativism and the end of World War II, the global community began to realize that relationships were needed between nations to develop a sense of mutual understanding and respect around the differences of cultures, peoples, and their governments. Individuals saw the need to explore other places and understand other people's lived experiences, not through the judgment of their own lives but through direct exposure to other countries. To this end, a number of international education efforts were born, such as the long-standing Experiment in International Living (Bennett 2010) and the foundation of the Peace Corps (Wetzel 1966), both of which served to provide international exposure and experience for Americans and still exist today.

While these and other programs of the time sent U.S. citizens to other countries, it was the 1946 legislation that created the Fulbright Program that created a full bilateral exchange. The Fulbright Program sent Americans abroad to represent the United States, and, simultaneously, people from around the world would come to study in the United States. Often considered by some experts to be the greatest international exchange program ever conceived (Gearhart 2014), the Fulbright Program was envisioned to encourage students to learn, research, and communicate across borders—both physical and intellectual. With the help of funds from war reparations, the Fulbright Program set up an exchange for all aspects of academics, ranging from science and technology to culture and politics to the arts and public service.

The Fulbright Program has been proven over the years to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries" (SRI International Center 2005, 51). World leaders agreed that international collaboration was a means of using research to produce knowledge that would benefit society collectively. To perpetuate these collaborations, U.S. and other institutions of higher education throughout the world further adopted the current concept of exchanges, study abroad, and other forms of academic mobility.

Social Justice Learning

In considering the intersections of social justice and international education, I offer a number of examples from my own experience as a faculty member and administrator, both in the classroom and through experiential learning opportunities that I have helped to facilitate. At my current institution, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, we have the unique mission of teaching the science, practice, and business of aviation and aerospace, preparing students for productive careers and leadership roles in service around the world. It is my belief that to prepare students to be global leaders, they must have an understanding of the importance of social responsibility and social justice.

In terms of demographics, the majority of my students are White, middle-class males with academic interests in science, technology, engineering, or

mathematics. This student demographic is underrepresented in study abroad, but they benefit from the opportunity to broaden their perspectives and challenge their worldviews. As both the senior international officer and a professor, I find it essential to introduce my students to social justice education because it is every student's responsibility to lead the world to a more equitable place. The pursuit of social justice is about removing the barriers of success for all people. Social justice is not some form of power shift designed to lessen men or punish one group of people; it is a movement to provide opportunity and resources for all, regardless of their status or ability.

Additionally, I believe it is essential to expose my classes to social justice learning outcomes because, despite the students' homogeneous appearance, the students represent diverse backgrounds and experiences. Among them, there are international students, gay men, differently-abled students with visible or invisible disabilities, veterans, liberals, and conservatives, to name a few. Moreover, there are non-majority groups represented within the classroom, including non-White men and women of all races. Despite any perceived similarities among my students, each of them has a different voice and perspective and each deserves the opportunity to be exposed to the lessons of social justice. The inherent diversity of these classes, though sometimes not immediately apparent, provide a strong argument for the use of a social justice curriculum. Once exposed to social justice, students are often interested in understanding how to leverage the concepts to champion themselves, or perhaps to advocate for their friends, family, or society as a whole.

Position of Privilege

In teaching my students, I have found it nearly impossible to move forward if they cannot agree that some of us are more privileged than others. In coming to this agreement, I believe it is necessary for the students to understand that this privilege is not due to their hard work and determination but because they face far fewer, or no, structural or social barriers working against their success and because of the arbitrary circumstances into which they were born. Making the point that we should perhaps feel a sense of responsibility to provide others the same opportunities that we have received is controversial, often leading to

contentious discussions about the amount of work and determination that they and their family have put forth for years.

Regularly in these discussions, my students have felt that they and their families' hard work is being dismissed and disrespected. Some of these students believe that on the topic of inequality, individuals who are oppressed by systematic barriers are really just less enterprising people, some individuals are unlucky, and others are too lazy to fight and sacrifice for the same opportunities as others who have "pulled themselves up by the bootstraps." It is a rewarding but challenging task for me to convince someone that systematic barriers exist or that oppression based on race, age, religion, or sexual orientation does have a profound impact on someone's self-worth, opportunity to succeed in a career, or even the ability to see a future where the individual is considered equal. In the next section, I will discuss the ways in which I use educational activities and exercises to help students confront their own biases and understand their privilege.

Educational Activities

While I have heard the advice and always attempt to ensure that my lessons are more about the students discovering their own opinions and coming to their own conclusions than adopting my way of thinking, it is essential to attempt to educate individuals on the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. I use activities like Global Beads® to attempt to create a visual representation of socialization and privilege; I show documentaries like *The Eye of the Storm* (1970) to drive home the concept of discrimination and its effects on individuals; I have even used movies like *Crash* (2004) and *Remember the Titans* (2000). These Hollywood films give my students a window into the various cultures and life experiences to which they would usually not be exposed, including lessons on bias, prejudice, and racism.

Often, these activities, personal stories during the classroom reflection, and other forms of experiential learning have the desired impact on the students, and they come away with a better understanding of discrimination, privilege, and the purpose of social justice.

Experiential Learning

While there are strengths and weakness that can be attributed to lecture-based social justice education, there is research that has shown that experiential pedagogy, such as international service-learning, exchange programs, and international volunteerism, is actually a more effective way to learn about oppression, privilege, and peacebuilding. Social justice education leaders Adams and Bell (2016) advocate for social justice education to be conducted through experiential learning, suggesting that the participants benefit from experiences that confront previous assumptions and biases while disrupting the students' incorrect social presumptions. Since international education's purpose, in addition to academic study, is to expose learners to new cultural experiences, increase student empathy and awareness of social injustices, and promote understating of the world and its people, the intersection of social justice and international education could not be more appropriate.

International Service-Learning

In my experience, teaching social justice in a lecture rarely resonates in the same way as exposing a student to a real-life experience, which is why I find it so fulfilling when I have the opportunity to lead an international service-learning program. My first foray into utilizing experiential learning as a modality for teaching social justice education was in the late 1990s, when I co-led an alternative spring break program to Atlanta, Georgia, around the theme of homelessness and hunger. The program was my graduate practicum, and I had a number of faculty and staff members helping to guide me in the concepts of cocurricular facilitation, reflection exercises, and social justice curriculum design.

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK IN ATLANTA

Each day of the weeklong experience provided me, my cofacilitator, and our 25 undergraduate students with a window into the lives and experiences of citizens in the Atlanta-metro area. Among the 25 student participants, about 60 percent were women and 40 percent were men and about 75 percent were White and 25 percent were people of color. Together, we aimed to serve the Atlanta community while learning about poverty and the food insecurity of

the region. Specifically, the educational experiences included volunteering at a soup kitchen, the second harvest food bank, a halfway home for men reentering society after incarceration, a community food garden, and a homeless shelter's children's day care center. Each night included several hours of reflection exercises and discussions regarding food security, poverty, and the systematic barriers that are the root causes of homelessness.

GLOBAL SERVICE INITIATIVE

Several years later, I combined this alternative spring break experience with my role as a fraternity and sorority adviser, which led me to my work with the Global Service Initiative (GSI) and Project Jamaica. The award-winning GSI is a social justice and civic engagement program designed to teach fraternity members from the United States and Canada about the importance of global engagement, social justice, and human insecurity. According to GSI, the typical participant is a White, college-aged male attending his sophomore or junior year of college or university in the United States or Canada. There is not an observable pattern of economic class, as there have been students of upper-, middle-, and lower-class means attending the program. Of the participants I have worked with, approximately 90 percent have been White and 10 percent have been students of color.

In terms of the experience, GSI is a seven-day, international service-learning program that runs three times annually, with a service component taking place on 4 of the 7 days. The service portion of the program runs between 7 and 8 hours daily; the typical service experience is manual labor and often involves mixing and laying concrete, framing walls, roofing buildings, arranging plumbing, setting tile, building fences, painting, and, occasionally, demolishing or clearing ground for projects. Each year, the participant cohorts accomplish at least three projects that span the week of the program; these projects have occurred each January, May, and June for the last 9 years of the program. Members of the group can choose to stay with one project throughout the week or rotate through all three projects. The host community itself becomes a part of the format of learning. As Lewin (1946) suggests, the educational environment is part of the experience.

Cultural experiences occur over 2 of the 7 days. The first cultural day includes a Sunday church service, an island boat tour, and lunch at an authentic Jamaican restaurant. The second day is spent experiencing music at the Zambali retreat and culinary center. Here, the participants experience drum lessons and see where their lunch is grown and harvested. In addition, a hike from the Zambali retreat to a Rastafarian commune occurs; participants follow a Rastafarian guide up the Cannan Mountains. The tour serves as an introduction to how the Rastas live, farm, and survive.

Logistically, Jamaica was chosen because of a long-term, existing relationships between the local government and the founder and main facilitator of the Global Service Initiative. These ties with the local government enable the GSI to better connect with local schools and engage in the local culture; it also ensures that the local community is both invested and involved in any decisions involving site selection and projects. The GSI experience has spawned an off-shoot program, titled Project Jamaica, that brings this same social justice program to other collegiate and noncollegiate groups, such as the Central Indiana Girl Scouts, multiple university honors programs, and numerous university leadership programs.

During the four times that I have facilitated one of the GSI programs, I have seen how international service can open the eyes and hearts of young men who otherwise have not been exposed to poverty, homelessness, childhood hunger, and limited access to work and school. An empirical review of the GSI, in the form of pre- and post-tests, has shown that this exposure has led to a statistical improvement in the following areas: (a) the participants' ability to identify privileges that they have in their lives; (b) their understanding of how to have an impact on global and social justice issues through their actions; and (c) their commitment to address issues they see in their community. In addition, from a qualitative perspective, participants have shared direct feedback that demonstrates their growth in social justice learning outcomes. A sampling from the 2019 cohort follows:

- "When I return home, I want to have an impact globally....
  Eventually, I'd also love to do Doctors Without Borders and do
  dental work in 3rd world countries."

- "I want to become further educated on the issues through immersing myself in various cultures."

- "I myself can make a huge impact into the lives of others. I also learned the importance of helping vs. service as well as acknowledging my privilege."

- "During this week, I learned that other cultures have really interesting and differing viewpoints to be appreciated."

Undergraduate Research Abroad

When I transitioned from student affairs to an academic position as executive director of undergraduate research, I brought my interest in social justice education with me. In this role, Embry-Riddle gave me the opportunity to create an annual research abroad program (George and Clevenger 2019). In my 4 years in the role, my cofacilitator and I shared in the responsibilities of serving as research supervisors to the dozens of students who traveled to one or more of the nine international locations, including Brazil, China, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Romania, and Singapore.

My cofacilitator, a professor of economics, supervised students' research into areas such as finance labor, industry, and innovation; I supervised research into culture, social justice, education, and human security. The undergraduate researchers who conducted social justice or cultural-based research programs met with me biweekly for 6 months before traveling with me and a cofacilitator to the country in which they were doing research. During these predeparture meetings, the students developed baseline knowledge of social justice terminology, human security concerns, and cultural norms for each of the countries that were visited. In addition, the students were taught qualitative research methods such as life story interviews (Atkinson 1998), Rapid Qualitative Inquiry (Beebe 2014), and Quick Ethnography (Handwerker 2011) that could be used as methodologies for their studies.

While each year and country provided a unique set of excursions, in-person interviews, opportunities for observations, and individual discussions, each of the experiences exposed students to the different cultures, human security

challenges, and social justice concerns for the various countries they were studying. Upon the students' return, they each produced a scholarly work about their experience that was presented either in a scholarly journal or via poster at one of numerous undergraduate research conferences. Examples of relevant topics included how the ethnic fragmentation and class division of cities contributes to human trafficking and complex criminal activity in Southeast Asia, cultural attitude shifts among multiple generations in Singapore, and women's access to higher education in a global context.

Hybrid Courses

My professional and personal interests in international education and social justice became even more closely aligned in 2014 when I moved into the university's senior international officer role and began teaching courses on ethics and social responsibility, international studies, and world politics and globalization. It was through this lens, and nearly 20 years of teaching social justice education, that I have designed hybrid courses with short-term social justice experiences as culminating course experiences.

My next two scheduled course experiences are co-agriculture experiences where my students and I will be working on a macadamia nut farm that was designed to assist with economic development and sustainable agriculture in Guatemala. During our time on the eco-agricultural project, we will be discussing the connections between poverty, social justice, and environmental injustice. We will see firsthand how the communities we visit are developing self-sustaining agriculture. We will assist in educating the general public about the environment, while they teach us about their customs and lifestyle. The following year, students in my international studies course are scheduled to become a participant cohort in Project Jamaica.

Reflection

Whether we are talking about lectures in class or my programs to Jamaica, China, or Atlanta, each day of these varied learning opportunities have ended with a reflective exercise designed to assist participants in considering how they have been influenced by and have grown through their exposure and

experience, as well as how their work relates to social justice and their values. Reflection questions and daily activities include discussions regarding the culture, poverty, and its effect on the people we met and the world; the difference between direct service and indirect philanthropy; ways to be active and engaged global citizens; and how to serve as an advocate for human development and social justice causes. Other discussions throughout the different programs include dialogues about privilege and equality, social injustice, and both equality of opportunity and equality of outcome.

Once my students or participants are exposed to the reality of poverty in many parts of the world, including in the United States, conversations about privilege take place more honestly and with the students better understanding the nuances of why someone might not have the same opportunity to learn, earn, or thrive. As individuals see the barriers to equality of opportunity, some feel helpless, while others are inspired to serve in their own communities, international communities, or even in some global or industrial leadership role.

Sustainable Development Goals

To provide the students who are inspired during or after their international experience with a framework for making a difference in the service to others, many international educators have adopted the United Nations (UN)'s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were created in 2012 during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The attendees and subsequent leaders in human security and social justice created what the United Nations considers to be a blueprint for overcoming the global challenges that all humankind face. Through international education experiences that include social justice education and the United Nations's SDGs, our students are able to contribute to the eradication of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation.

My experiences with the SDGs as a framework for actionable items have provided me with a dual-sided paradigm. On one side, I see the need for a structure that gives both a plan and tangible goals; on the other side, I have found that the SDGs can sometimes cause well-meaning people to feel that they understand the situations on the ground more than those actually living

them. It is imperative when we are working alongside individuals in their own community that we listen, learn, and take direction on the projects that we work and the support that we give. The SDGs have the potential to put blinders on our students and to provide us with goals that are not supported by the community we are serving. In terms of how the SDGs can intersect with social justice and international education, it is essential that we only consider these as goals if and when they fit within the expressed objectives of the community leaders.

Conclusion

As more international educators choose to adopt a role in social justice education, it is important to realize that, even though higher education is a generally welcoming environment for the ideas espoused by social justice, there has been little formal agreement on what social justice education should look like or what learning outcomes social justice educators should teach. The future of social justice through international education needs more scholarship and a wider set of agreed upon definitions.

We need more international education leaders to be able to articulate why social justice is a worthy goal for college graduates, as well as experiential reflective programs designed with those students and social justice in mind. International education has the power to impact social justice education today and long into the future, not only as a field of scholarship but also as pedagogy of hope. The concepts of social justice and international education are inextricably linked, as are the goals that each espouse. I am eager to see us all write the next chapter of social justice and its intersections with international education.

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