From the perspective of democracy, the real important question is what is the meaning ascribed to those events by the people who are trying to make democracy. That’s the thing that’s going to push their practice forward, and their substantive struggle is where do they get to as a result of this process, how has it changed their work, what has it made them do differently? And in the course of that, you’re continuously getting closer to, but never actually achieving your goal of building democracy. You’re never done. And for that matter, nor do you ever finish building racial justice.

So it was such an “Aha!” moment for me to realize we actually don’t need an independent expert. In fact, any independent expert would lack the capacity to assess what the people who are practicing in these five sites were trying to assess in their own work.

(ceasar McDowell) 

The Race and Democracy Reflection Project set out to build a learning process with five organizations in the Rockefeller Foundation’s Race, Policy and Democracy program. The project aimed to explore building democratic participation at the community level while confronting the issues of race and racial inequity. We believed that examining key moments in the work would generate learning that will be highly effective—both for the respective organizations, and for the project’s goal in creating usable knowledge for sharing with other communities. The race and democracy reflection process captured the knowledge that arose from the on-the-ground experience of a diverse group of practitioners. This repository will significantly contribute to the broader debate surrounding race and democracy in the United States.

Starting Orientation

We come from this notion that there is no distinction between theory and practice; all there is in the world is work. Everyone theorizes about their work. However, some people have highly developed methodologies for doing that theorizing, and some of us don’t. If we don’t, it gets in the way of the work. It gets in the way of us learning over time. It also means that there are a lot of things that we don’t have to offer in relationship to the dominant conversation in the discipline. So our work has been centered around the issue of how do you support and create processes and methodologies for helping practitioners identify their knowledge and move from that knowledge into naming the theory embedded in it.

(Ceasar McDowell, Center for Reflective Community Practice)

We assume that people working in communities are unconsciously working on questions, and those questions are pushing them in their work. We invite people to take it on faith that if we focus on finding those questions, and explore them in the context of your work, then what you do in your reflection process will serve you by letting you learn about those questions in a purposeful
Community practitioners constantly theorize about their work, regularly seeking and receiving information relevant to this theory-making process. Our reflection project aimed to provide opportunities for race and democracy practitioners to articulate and examine those theories in light of knowledge gained from their work. We developed a two-part framework for the reflection process. The first stage consisted of a series of three-day forums which took place in the respective local communities of the five organizations. These organizations reflected on their own arena of race and democracy practice while developing questions and a deeper understanding of their work through the examination of significant events. The second stage was comprised of a collective, cross-site reflection process, which took place in Boston over the course of three days, followed several months later by a one-day session in New York. Our intention for the collective gatherings was to extend the learning of the individual organizations through feedback and dialogue with the other sites, and to follow that with collective dialogue focused on key issues within race and democracy work.

CRCP has developed a number of frameworks for reflective practice. The type of reflective practice exemplified by this eighteen-month process is that of an intensive retrospective review of several years of work. Grounded in the goal of generating learning for each site, we documented the work across sites and compiled a database of empirical material that addresses the issue of race in the context of building democratic community participation. Thus, the reflection process described below—aimed to provoke serious reflection—was designed to serve multiple purposes. The strategy for balancing those purposes began during the collaborative-design stage with each organization, and was based on the following central design principle: The reflection process should be oriented around the current learning needs of each organization, not the ending summary product.

Designing Reflection in Collaboration with Race and Democracy Sites

For some sites, the story of the case had been told, but not the story of the experience. The experience story hadn’t been told. Someone had told the story and framed it in relationship to a particular view on the work. The true story of what was happening there, the experience of the people involved, really hadn’t been told and they recognized that in the middle of the reflection session. It’s like, “Well actually, no we haven’t really told the story because the story is really all these other things.”

(Ceasar McDowell)

The notion of looking at significant moments in projects or campaigns is an important piece of learning from the past, because we’re trying to go back in time, and take learnings out of what the work has been. The story-driven aspect of it is powerful in looking back at periods of time in a project that you think hold important learning for you.

(Joy Amulya)

The reflection process began with initial visits to each site by Dayna Cunningham, the Rockefeller Foundation officer who developed the Race, Policy, and Democracy funding
program, along with Joy Amulya and Ceasar McDowell of the Center for Reflective Community Practice (CRCP). These visits introduced the sites to the Rockefeller Foundation’s desire to document the learning from race and democracy work. Meanwhile, the visits also created the opportunity for initial reflection by each site on questions critical to its work. Furthermore, the visits provided the opportunity to discuss the nature of our role as independent facilitators, working closely with the sites to design and carry out the reflection process.

Following these initial visits, we returned to each location on our own to begin the collaborative process of designing the focus, scope, and specific activities in the reflection process. We emphasized that the Rockefeller Foundation’s summarizing of the learning across sites would not drive the reflection process; rather it would be addressed afterward using material recorded during the process.

The design process was a joint discussion in which we provided an introduction to CRCP’s thinking about reflective practice, underscoring the importance of surfaceing the knowledge embedded in community practice. We also described the two-part framework for the race and democracy reflection process, and shared a list of issues that needed to be resolved in designing it. The sites, in turn, shared their thinking about their own work, and began describing what they hoped could be examined. We then engaged in a joint dialogue where the members of each site brainstormed the questions they faced in their work. The following design issues were resolved:

- What current issues does the organization face? Which of these issues has the highest priority? Which issues are best-suited for being addressed through the reflection process?
- On what areas of work should the reflection process focus? Which areas offer the most potential for learning about the current issues?
- Who should be involved in the reflection process? What perspectives and roles in the work need to be brought together to examine the learning in the specific areas of work?
- What reflection techniques would best suit the organization’s current learning culture while generating the desired learning outcomes?
- What should be the schedule for the reflection sessions and how long should they last?

Capturing Reflection and Creating a Permissions Process

The CRCP, the race and democracy sites, and the Rockefeller Foundation all agreed that the first stage of individual-reflection sessions would be recorded on audiotape. Transcripts were prepared from these recordings. Copies of the transcripts (and tapes as requested) were provided to the sites. Each site then decided what material to share from its own reflection process. CRCP retained copies of the tapes and transcripts to facilitate conducting an informed consent process. Sites identified material that should not be considered for summary products about the reflection process. CRCP then prepared a list of categories of material designated as sensitive by each site, and documented the site’s specific instructions for either omitting the material or, when appropriate, editing it.

The second stage of collective reflection was recorded on videotape. This decision was driven by
the need for the Rockefeller Foundation to produce a visual media product as a summary of the race and democracy work. The sites agreed to this, making decisions accordingly about the material that they would share. At each cross-site gathering, CRCP allowed individuals to flag material for exclusion from the record in the following manners: (a) they could indicate something they had just said was off the record; (b) they could fill out a form identifying material that should be excluded; and (c) they could communicate a similar request following the cross-site gatherings.

Finally, a process was set up for each site to review the DVD and CD-ROM summaries of the material in order to ensure that the meaning of the material was not distorted by the context.

Reflection by Organizations:

From Critical Moments to a Learning-Edge Question

The basic structure of the reflection process—designed collaboratively with each organization—was similar across the five sites. This structure included:

- A set of initial questions that framed the focus, purpose and scope of the learning each organization wished to address.
- Identification of the areas of work most relevant to explore in the reflection process.
- The use of “critical moments reflection” (see below) to summarize the most significant moments in the selected areas of work according to different perspectives. The lists of critical moments from each perspective were then shared with the overall group.
- Deeper analysis of selected critical moments aimed at making new connections, and cataloging the questions embedded in them.
- Returning to the initial questions in light of the reflection generated by the critical moments and the development of new insights into those questions.
- Identification of the “learning edges” revealed through the reflection process. Specifically, learning edges are those issues around which the sites needed to most develop their understanding in order to advance their work.

Critical moments reflection. A critical moment is anything that stands out in the course of doing the work. It could be a period of years or a brief struggle; it could be an “Aha!” moment; it could be a downturn or an upturn. By probing critical moments, we were able to help the members of each organization describe their thinking about their work and the assumptions guiding their thinking.

The reflection process structure took on a different character at each site. For example, Southern Echo—a “mother” organization working to develop a network of community organizations across Mississippi—decided to include representatives from each of five community organizations in the reflection process. Along with the staff from the central organization, each community group identified its own set of critical moments from the perspective of that community. In a smaller organization like Texas LEADS, each person involved in the work had
a different vantage point based on his/her role. Therefore, each person contributed a list of critical moments from their viewpoint.

We experienced two particularly rich moments during the reflection process. One was the significance of each organization witnessing critical moments from different perspectives. This illustrated the contribution of different vantage points on the work, as well as the importance of developing a connected understanding across these perspectives. The other compelling point occurred during the dialogue that probed the significance of selected critical moments:

One of the things that I saw was how deeply everyone has engaged in this work, regardless of their role in the work and their position in the organization. It is not surface work. They may each have different ways of articulating, but they really are struggling at a deep level about what is this work, where am I in it and what does it mean.

(Ceasar McDowell)

Cross-Site Reflection:
Extending Organizational Learning and Building Collective Dialogue

Preparation. At the onset of the cross-site reflection gathering, we asked each organization to view the gathering as an opportunity to reflect with people who were engaged in similar struggles in other places. To facilitate this process, we worked with each organization to formulate a learning-edge question (a question related to the learning-edge issues that emerged during the individual site-reflection process). We then asked them to select two stories from their work that illustrated that question. For those sites that had identified one or more learning edges, we prepared excerpts from the stories and discussions from the session transcripts. In other cases, we excerpted key questions from the transcripts to assist in identifying the learning-edge questions.

We also set up a conference call with a point-person from each site to discuss their hopes for the collective gathering and to make decisions about the amount of time allocated for different activities during the reflection process—such as extending the organizational-level learning process and engaging in collective dialogue about field-level questions.

First collective gathering. The first cross-site reflection session took place in Boston over the course of three days. Each organization was asked to bring three people. (We made an exception as requested by one larger organization.) Shared meals, evening music, and late-night conversation helped foster relationships, while providing time for informal dialogue. Notably, a number of important issues surfaced during evening hallway conversations and were formally introduced into the reflection process the following day.

Story Sharing. The first day was dedicated to the sharing of learning-edge questions and stories from each site. The organizations also described their thinking and approach to their overall work. In order to allow ample time for each site’s turn, we provided “reflection response forms” in lieu of a question-and-discussion period at the end of each turn.
We had speculated that the sites could most effectively learn about each other’s work if the presentations were organized in terms of struggles and learning, rather than by successes and firm ideas. It was powerful to listen to the sites discuss the learning that had emerged from their reflection sessions, and to subsequently hear them speaking about their work in terms of the learning-edge questions.

Cross-Site Dialogue Groups. The story-sharing process set the stage for the small-group dialogue session the morning of the second day. In preparation for this session, the reflection response forms from the story-sharing session were compiled and passed back to participants along with a set of instructions for reviewing the feedback. Participants received feedback from the members of other sites detailing shared aspects, powerful components, and, most importantly, questions offered from other perspectives on race and democracy work. We asked each person to select points of feedback they found most striking, and to choose those points they wanted to discuss in their cross-site dialogue group. We told them ahead of time who would be in their group so that they could choose to directly ask another person to elaborate on their question.

Each cross-site dialogue group contained a mix of sites, people in varying roles (such as organizer or leader), and people from different races and genders. A facilitator supported the members of each site in constructing dialogue about the issues important to them. People could use their turn however they wished. Most chose to describe one or more questions they had found particularly powerful and asked the group to discuss those questions.

The dialogue from these cross-site groups was rich and compelling. The discussions led to sharing different ways of thinking about the questions concerning race and democracy work, and opened up the possibility of sharing the varied struggles that participants had experienced.

Closing the organization-level learning process. At the completion of the cross-site groups, each organization reconvened on its own to compile the insights and dialogue generated by the different groups. After debriefing with one another, they were asked to summarize what their organization had learned about their work, and what significant issues had emerged in discussions with the other sites. We then brought the sites back together so that participants could share their key issues with the full group.

We found remarkable the extent to which each site had progressed solely from the story-sharing session. It was clear that ideas from other groups had been integrated, yet not in a way that appeared casual or out of context. Instead, each organization had assimilated new ways of thinking into the way it was now framing its work.

Transition into dialogue about collective questions. Halfway into the second day, there was a transition to field-level questions concerning race and democracy work. Identifying these questions helped bridge the organizational and the collective reflection work. Participants journaled for a few minutes on questions they deemed important for the full group to discuss, and then shared those questions with two other people. Each person was asked to name the question offered by another person. A recorder wrote the questions on flip charts while the facilitator worked with the group to organize these questions into emerging topic areas.
The group then collectively chose the highest priority topic areas. Two topics were selected: “How do we build and sustain accountable leadership?” and “What is our understanding of democracy and how do we differ?” These questions provided the focus for a full-group dialogue on the final day of the gathering.

Follow-up cross-site gathering. As time was limited at the first cross-site gathering where field-level questions about race and democracy work were discussed, a follow-up session was scheduled to allow for further dialogue. In particular, the collective dialogue session at the first gathering had focused on democracy-building issues, thus the follow-up session was oriented around race and power in democracy work. Each organization led off by describing how race and power impacted its work. This powerful discussion again juxtaposed ways of thinking from different races, roles, and contexts.

Learning about Reflective Practice in Race and Democracy Work

I like the notion of getting people to tell stories. I think people relate to that, we take it out of the abstract and get people to give us concrete examples of how this stuff plays out in their day-to-day work, so that then we have really have a very, very rich conversation. I don’t think we generally have that space to do that, or we’re only talking about it in the heat of the moment, and that moment’s gone and we haven’t really thought about what we did.

(Kathay Feng, Asian Pacific American Legal Center)

The struggle to hold something is an important question. How do we hold, make use of, retain and expand what has happened? How do we get it so we can really claim it? Can we begin to move from this process toward some basic pieces that we can hold, and that can be utilized to inform our work in the days to come?

(Nelson Johnson, Beloved Community Center)

The feedback from the reflection process overwhelmingly affirmed that it had supported the sites in learning from their own and each others’ work. Moreover, the process facilitated learning about reflective practice in relation to race and democracy work. A number of points surfaced:

*Stories and questions are important.*

We knew from our previous work that reflection is more effective when grounded in the particulars of stories of lived experience. We also knew that questions were key elements in directing and moving the reflection process. Yet by witnessing and subsequently analyzing the nature of the reflection process across five different organizations, our knowledge about how stories and questions drive reflection expanded considerably. Stories fuel reflection. By crystallizing struggles and breakthroughs, by connecting events, by locating meaning and revealing emotional significance, stories drive dialogue and insight. Questions, on the other hand, provide the compass with which to navigate understanding. Additionally, questions often surface as independent objects of discovery following storytelling and dialogue. The reflection process yielded a rich set of teaching-stories and critical questions that we believe will push the issues of race and democracy in important new directions.
**History is important.**
Upon witnessing the reflection process, clear differences emerged in the way that each organization holds, reflects on, and digests their community’s history surrounding race and democracy. The practice of reflection not only revealed these differences, it was shaped by them. History adds a significant additional dimension to the work of learning from practice.

**Human developmental processes underlie the work.**
For the people doing the organizing—as well as for the people in the community who are being engaged—there are complex developmental processes at work. These processes relate to overcoming internalized oppression, integrating one’s own oppression within the work, and forming relationships with individuals. The reflection process highlighted differences across the sites in naming this human-development dimension, as well as the extent to which they are explicitly incorporating these differences in their work.

Reflection makes it possible to realign action with the deeper purpose of democracy. Although each group originated its work with an analysis of race and democracy, the lack of opportunities for reflection on practice had made it difficult for them to stay focused on their goals of building democracy. It seemed more possible to reassess strategy and tactics with less in-depth reflection. However, the challenge of keeping day-to-day practices in line with democracy goals may be much greater. The intensive mode of reflective practice used in this project provided the opportunity for these groups to examine their practice in light of these deeper goals.
Utilizing Citizenship Learning as a Tool in Fostering Development of Community Partnerships: The Case of Rural Communities in the Lake Victoria Basin of Kenya

David M. Amudavi

Department of Education, Cornell University

Introduction

Community cohesiveness and well-being in many rural communities have been eroded through the pursuit of individualism, an emphasis on capital accumulation, privatization of public provided services and reduction of social welfare. This trend has been worsened by effects of globalization, industrialization and liberalization through structural adjustment programs that have strained vibrant subsistence economies and resulted in a collapse of the requisite infrastructure to support agricultural production (Reed, et al. 2000). The strive to support rural communities to make good choices by expanding sources of resources, knowledge and information and enhancing their capacities to process the information is therefore critical (Christoplos et al, 2001). The role of citizenship learning in forging community partnerships appropriate for communities to engage in social, economic and political activities that affect their lives looks feasible. This process could partly be in response to the failure of the supply-driven, top-down development approaches that have been characterized by excessive state intervention to attain equity with growth; the shortcomings of the private sector in distributing community resources and improving the conditions of the poor; and the inability of the ‘third sector’, the civil society, to reach the widely spread disadvantaged rural sector (Ojha & Morin, 2001).

This paper draws on insights from a research project conducted to investigate how civil society organizations could be empowered to address information and technology needs and sources for resource-scarce livestock keepers in the Lake Victoria Basin of East Africa. A Search Conference was undertaken by engaging a systematically selected sample of 42 participants in a deliberative planning event. The adult learners deliberated on the kind of life they desired by articulating the concept of sustainable development as it relates to economic development, social development, and environmental protection without being primed up.

The Search Conference

A Search Conference is designed to identify within turbulent and uncertain environments a desired direction of an organization or community and increases the effectiveness of strategic planning and its implementation (Emery & Purser, 1996). It is a collective participatory event that enables participants to collectively create an action plan that they can take responsibility for. It typically lasts about 2½ days, with 25-75 participants, and involves a complex interplay between plenary sessions and small group discussions that create valuable arenas for dialogue

1 This is from a research project, “Voices of the Poor Livestock Keepers in the Lake Victoria Basin with a Focus on Natural Resource Management”, carried out in June/July 2002, and sponsored by the International Center for Research on Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya.
Due to the potential of harnessing people power, searches have found application in a variety of contexts that include community development, natural resource management, child literacy, workplace redesign, and organizational change in order to set shared goals, develop and implement long-term plans, build new partnerships, and create new policy actions (Emery & Purser, 1996).

The Search Conference was guided by a search question developed and framed by the participants themselves as: What strategies can our households design to achieve sufficient food production to improve our livelihoods? Ellis (1998) defines rural livelihood as the process by which households construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities for survival in order to improve their standard of living. This approach was based on the premise that communities possess a great deal of useful knowledge and experience that is crucial to planning. It draws on the ‘civic’ model of deliberation and inclusion as comprehensively summarized by Holmes and Scoones (2000). Deliberative and inclusion processes (DIPs) can increase the likelihood of compliance and support from the affected population by building their concerns into policy decisions and developing a consensus about the way forward (Pelletier et al., 1999). The deliberative process aims at widening the basis of power by enabling participants to define problems from their own perspectives and experiences, and to seek solutions, which they regard as appropriate and suitable for their culture and aspirations. As an emerging tool that is distinguishable from other participatory tools, searches are claimed to foster a common understanding and stimulate social energy and collaborative action of fundamentally contentious, complex, and systemic issues that involve numerous social actors. Weishboard & Janoff (2000) indicate that searches aim to:

- **Identify common ground.** The Search participants uphold mutual values, create shared future visions, and develop agendas in order to develop a shared picture of reality that no participant had at the beginning.
- **Stimulate rapid action.** The Search generates concrete strategies that take advantage of the desirable trends and have agreement from a wide range of individuals and groups.
- **Facilitate participant learning.** The Search process helps communities or organizations to break through limiting assumptions and creates an environment, which supports discovery of common agendas, shared ideals and innovative learning.
- **Increase the potential for multistakeholder cooperation.** The context of a Search juxtaposes participants in such a way that their normal community roles are suspended and thereby come to accommodate, at least in the short run, others’ viewpoints, perspectives, and values.
- **Follow a participatory, inclusive and open process.** A Search is considered as a process of self-management in which everyone is invited to share leadership and participate as peers.

A Search Conference consists of the phases indicated in Figure 1.

---

**Figure 1: The Search Conference Process**
Shared History

After formulating the search question, the search participants deliberated on a wide range of issues that went beyond what the research project had narrowly planned. Deliberative processes can succeed or fail, empower action or fuel resignation, enhance citizenship learning and democratic practices or rationalize decisions already made (Forester, 1999). The community we dealt with critically assessed the social, political, economic and other contextual causes that contribute to their level of disempowerment. A common vision held by all the participants served to bind them together, encouraging development of trust and collaborative effort. Such a shared vision is vital for a learning organization or community because it provides the focus and social energy for learning (Senge, 1990). The basis of this argument is that once linked, the possibility for social action on behalf of the collective is present, and therewith, the possibility of societal transformation.

**Issues Emerging from the Shared History**

The participants discussed, identified and ranked what they considered as the issues that emerged out of their shared history as shown in Table 1. Lack of credit facilities was ranked as the most important issue that merits urgent attention while the issue of social vices was ranked the least.

**Table 1: Ranking of issues identified**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of credit facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue of social vices</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lack of credit facilities & 1 
Disease and pest control & 2 
Reduced soil fertility & 3 
Inappropriate technology & 4 
Marketing problems and poor infrastructure & 5 
Deforestation & 6 
Changing rainfall patterns (unreliable) & 7 
Lack of veterinary and extension services & 8 
Increased population pressure & 9 
High mortality rates & 10 
Culture of laziness & 11 
Culture of ignorance & 12 
Social vices (e.g. crime, theft) & 13 

### Probable and Desired/Ideal Futures

The participants were divided into six groups and discussed and envisioned what the future of the community would be like if nothing was done to address the issues identified, and what future they would desire to have. The purpose of this phase was threefold. First, to enable the participants to discover new information about themselves, both cognitively and experientially. Second, to arouse them emotionally, since emotions supply the motive power for change. Thirdly, encourage them to change their behavior in the light of what they would have learnt and to practice the new patterns. The groups wrote their visions on newsprint papers and pasted on the walls. Through the KEEP, DROP and CREATE design, the groups in a plenary session went through all the items on the lists of the desired future. The results of the two “future scenarios” are presented in Table 2.

Through understandings derived from their shared histories, deliberation and critical reflection on the probable and desired futures, the participants came up with six key issues.

**Social support services for social change:** Education on reproductive health; population control; culture of commitment to work; commitment to implementing actions; sanctions.

**Credit accessibility for livelihood diversification:** Provision of credit facilities, and knowledge and skills of income generating alternatives.

**Agricultural support services:** Subsidies on inputs; extension and veterinary services, and technology for intensification and diversification.

**Natural resource management:** Soil fertility improvement: appropriate tree species for timber, firewood, and indigenous trees; spring protection, and soil and water conservation.

Community partnerships with external support institutions: Forge partnerships between the community and government, private and civil society organizations.

**Market access and infrastructure improvement:** Securing access to markets is a crucial step along the path to economic advancement for the resource limited farmers.

### Table 2: Probable and Future Scenarios
### Probable Future vs. Desired Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probable Future</th>
<th>Desired Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased crime rate leading to disincentive in</td>
<td>Assured food security through use of new technologies and innovations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agricultural investments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced labor productivity</td>
<td>Good education to the young generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land fragmentation due to increased population</td>
<td>Learning community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food insecurity</td>
<td>Reproductive health education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor food nutrition</td>
<td>Knowledge and technology for intensification of land use: variety of crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased poverty</td>
<td>Productive and sustainable agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of innovation and learning of new ideas</td>
<td>Afforestation and agroforestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor health, especially among women</td>
<td>Create and sustain effective partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil degradation and reduced soil fertility</td>
<td>Income diversification in non-agricultural activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of water due to rivers drying up</td>
<td>Improved access to markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased mortality</td>
<td>Accessible to government functionaries and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pest and disease outbreaks</td>
<td>Community cooperatives and associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deforestation and desertification</td>
<td>Culture that supports current social context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor and reduced livestock production</td>
<td>Linkage with extension and research institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underutilized and inaccessible markets</td>
<td>Good infrastructure: roads, stable bridges, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment and reduced incomes</td>
<td>Accessible to credit facilities and markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced role of extension</td>
<td>Affordable veterinary and extension services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased farm production</td>
<td>Local industries to enhance the local economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced shelf-life of produce</td>
<td>Clean environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced timber for domestic purposes</td>
<td>Affordable public health facilities and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffordable privatized extension services</td>
<td>A self-reliant, self-determined community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic provision of education to children</td>
<td>Input subsidies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of unproductiveness</td>
<td>Improved adult education facilities, e.g. seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of poor leadership</td>
<td>Strong sanctions by the local leaders against vices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information asymmetry</td>
<td>Water supplies: sink boreholes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Action Planning

The participants were divided into six groups using their own system and each group assigned one of the issues to plan for. They were to be responsible for implementing all their plans. The participants were also to be responsible for controlling and coordinating their own work as a large self-managing group after the planning process. This surprised most of the participants since they were used to expecting agencies to be the ones to come in and help plan and implement projects. The normative expectation was replaced by a self-driving desire to harness all the energy and efforts to make it work. The participants were expected to involve other organizational members whose abilities could contribute to making the envisioned future a reality. Moreover, when the planning itself is temporarily finished these people will continue to scan the environment and adjust their plans accordingly. The participants identified who could be their possible actors to partner with in addressing these issues. The planning teams identified the local government, provincial administration and agricultural office as the entry points for
establishing partnerships. They also identified some of the civil society organizations operating in the area. They recognized that they did not have all the answers to their complex problems, but were motivated to seek solutions in collaboration with their local leaders. The participants also felt encouraged to enjoin with others in the community who would share common enthusiasms for future action.

Evaluation of the Search Conference

Yalom (1995) claims that the primary source of risk taking in groups concerns sharing personal information with others. Participants in this study shared personal information with one another, but few experienced that as risk taking behavior. Instead, they found sharing incomplete thoughts and ideas with the group to be the primary source of risk taking. The ground rules established at the beginning of the Search Conference made individual participants to take risk and share their underdeveloped thoughts and ideas. They were respected rather than subjected to ridicule. This show of respect helped to create an environment that allowed trust to grow and develop leading to a very successful Search. From the evaluation of participating in the Search Conference, 73% of the participants indicated that they had learnt to either moderate or great extent new factual information, 93% had learnt about the concerns of other people, 65% had altered their concerns related to natural resource management in their community, majority (95%) had learnt about the seriousness of food insecurity and 83% saw areas in which they converged. A high majority of 81% indicated a sense of commitment to the derived action plans. Almost half of the participants, (55%), were not aware of the availability of resources in the community (see, Table 3). Seventy four percent felt that by participating in the Search Conference they were made to feel more concerned with their future.

Table 3. Level of satisfaction in participating in the Search Conference (N=42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
<th>% Indicating Moderate or Great Extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did you learn new factual information?</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did you learn about the concerns of other participants?</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did you learn about seriousness of food security problems in the community?</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did participating alter your own concerns related to natural resource management in your community?</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did participating help you see areas in which you agree with others?</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent were problems or opportunities identified that you were not previously aware of?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent were actions identified address problems or capitalize on opportunities?</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did you become aware of the presence of resources available to</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Citizenship Learning and Community Partnerships

Citizenship learning could be instrumental in facilitating empowerment and inclusion of all communities, and building the capacity of local communities to find solutions to their problems. A conception of citizenship encapsulates reflexivity, multiple and fluid identities, active social learning, new forms of public and private spheres, and communicative competencies (Harris, 2001). These expectations of notion of citizenship as embedded in social cultural contexts present challenges to advocates of adult learning. In this challenge, community groups can serve as an important vehicle for enabling communities to access resources and information and provide contexts for citizenship learning through social interaction (van den Ban, 2002). Such interaction entails building new relationships about mutual sharing (risks, costs, markets, information, practices, technology, expertise, rewards etc.) and not controlling, having open discussions and dialogues, and being simultaneously educators as well as educators (Kanter, 1994; Freire, 1973). This resonates with the definition of a community group as provided by Wood & Judikis (2002):

“… A community group is a constituency of entities who have a sense of purpose and/or common interest, for which they assume mutual responsibility, acknowledge their interconnectedness, respect their individual differences among members and commit themselves to the well-being of each other, and the integrity and well-being of the broader community.”

The crucial implication that the outputs of the Search Conference serves for this paper is to provide the platform for a discussion on how the benefits of citizenship learning should be more adequately and comprehensively understood through the notion of partnership building. Citizenship learning has the practical application at the community level of minimizing the disempowering of marginalized social groups by effects of economic forces. This coupled with community partnerships shifts community development to networks among organizations which share resources, collaborate on projects, meet community needs, and build capacity in the interrelations among agencies to solve community problems (Chrislip, 2002), and provide continued platforms for lifelong learning. Community development results upon developing social capital, which comprises the mutual relationships, interactions, networks and trust that emerge from social groups and facilitate communication for mutual benefit (Ballati & Falk, 2001). Field & Schuller (1997, p. 17) in examining the kinds of social arrangements that best promote lifelong learning remark that:

Social capital … treats learning not as a matter of individual acquisition of skills and knowledge, but as a function of identifiable social relationships. It also draws attention to the role of norms and values in the motivation to learn as well as in the acquisition of skills, and the deployment of new know-how.
Social capital also lays a fertile ground for social organization to develop collective institutions through which members can articulate their needs, negotiate over their differences, participate in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and projects, and take up activities of managing individual as well as common pool resources (Chrislip, 2002).

**Conclusion and Implications**

The ultimate goal of citizenship learning should be to ensure that different knowledge systems are utilized to facilitate the capacity of rural communities to deal with broader issues of sustainability, equity, and livelihoods. This begs on intervening agencies to better understand local conditions and embrace the worldview of the rural farming communities. However, while local people may be able to add to total understanding through an accurate knowledge of local contexts, they do not necessarily have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the broader economic, organizational and political situation (Thrupp et al, 1994). Hence, strengthening the capacity of citizens to take action in the future through awareness building, organizational strengthening or resource mobilization is clearly critical as demonstrated by the Search experience. This resonates with what Healey (1997, p. 286) terms as ‘soft infrastructure’ - the institutional building capacity and mutual learning where social collaboration and invention occurs, that operates alongside and is capable of influencing the ‘hard infrastructure’ of the established government institutions, social institutions, and regulatory institutions.

The Search Conference demonstrated clearly how the Emukunzi community in Kenya articulated the issue of sustainable development as it integrates economic development, social development, and environmental protection without being primed up to do so. Therefore, by asking two key questions: What for, and, who benefits, will the public, private sector and civil society organizations respond to the challenge facing rural communities in utilizing the potential of lifelong citizenship learning. Inviting people to participate actively in the politics that shape their lives and assisting them develop skills from the process is one of the hallmarks of a Search Conference. It provides one of the conditions under which the potentials of participatory development approaches could be harnessed to the point where people at the individual, group and organizational levels are able to assume new roles and responsibilities as they arrive at collective analyses and creative solutions to common problems.

Social scientists can use their skills and privileges to give voice to those whose narratives have been excluded from the public domain and civil discourse. By sharing collective stories, people are able to bring private problems into public issues, thereby making collective identity and collective solutions possible. Search Conference strategy should be adapted cautiously so as to avoid contributing to the rhetoric of community empowerment, an observed flaw with PRA that has been used by organizations for their own purposes without much more than a hint of genuine engagement (Cornwall et al, 2001). The most important challenge for adult educators then concerns the way in which education and extension programs should maximize the opportunities for creating community partnerships that are useful in generating desired citizenship learning opportunities for its participants.

**Acknowledgments**
I am grateful to the International Center for Research on Agroforestry (ICRAF) in sponsoring this Search Conference, the community members of Emukunzi who participated in the Search Conference. I also acknowledge the following for their contributions to this research: Nelson Mango and Roselyn Gichimo who acted us Search facilitators, Njeri Muhia the Project Coordinator, Arlington Omushieni (District Agriculture and Livestock Extension Officer, Vihiga District), and the Emuhaya Divisional extension staff who provided valuable logistical support.

References


Greetings Everyone. I come from Onyota’a:ka (People of the Standing Stone) known as Oneida First Nation of the Thames, near London Ontario. My name in the Longhouse is Tsyot s\^ nit. My research name given to me by one of my thesis participants and an Elder in my home community gave me the name Ka li wi saks meaning “She who gathers information.” I am here to share with you some of the information I have gathered. Eileen Antone is my English name. I am from the Turtle Clan. It has taken me a long time to be able to bring you greetings in my traditional language. The language that the Creator gave to my ancestors to pass down to all generations of Onyota’a:ka people.

Because of racist and discriminatory government policies I was led to believe that only the language of the dominant culture was valid and acceptable. How sad it is that many parents and grandparents experienced the oppression of these policies that they felt it was better for them not to teach their children and grandchildren to speak the beautiful language that carries their culture, values and beliefs. I am so glad to have this opportunity to be a part of this panel discussion, to be able to share with you some of the information and teachings that I experienced in my learning journey to this point. First I will tell you a little bit about myself. My work is in the field of education and my research work was about reclaiming voice.

In my journey through the Euro-western school system I knew my experience was incomplete. I knew what was required pertaining to the Western perspective because of my formal training, but what about the Aboriginal perspective. Euro-western education has been superimposed on Aboriginal communities for a long time even though there was a traditional way of education within each Aboriginal nation. In the course of my research, I came across a poem entitled EDUCATION (Solomon 1990:79). Arthur Solomon, an Anishnawbe spiritual teacher, wrote this poem as a song of hope. In this poem he writes about the traditional way of education and states that "The first principle involved was total respect and acceptance" of those being taught. He indicated the continuity of the lifelong learning process and the sacredness of all life. He then points to the "disruption" that came to the Aboriginal people in this land when "education became compulsory miseducation for another purpose." When this happened he states that "the circle of life was broken and the continuity ended." As Solomon argues in the last line of the poem, "It is that continuity which is now taken up again in the spiritual rebirth of the people."

The message in this poem written by the Anishnawbe spiritual elder broke the spell of the Euro-western concepts that had led me to believe that the Native ways of learning and teaching were insignificant. His assertion that education became “compulsory miseducation” for the Native people has challenged and empowered me to search for ways that would restore the circle of life and the continuity of learning for all Aboriginal peoples. The message in this poem allowed me...
to relate to the Native concept of the sacredness of life that has sustained our people for thousands of years. It has been a difficult journey to realign my cognitive processes and relate to a bigger picture, one that doesn’t negate the Aboriginal world-view but lifts it to a primary position of inclusion and equality. It has also been through this journey that I have learned also the sacredness of Aboriginal Identity.

**What is Aboriginal identity?**
The Aboriginal identity lies in people’s collective life, their history, ancestry, culture, values, traditions and ties to the land. Before I began a concerted effort to discover how the formal educational process worked, I didn't understand anything about the underlying Euro-western principles that Native schools were built upon. I only knew that I was made to feel inferior; and that if I ‘worked' hard enough that maybe some day I would be just like the white people who were running the schools and every other system I was affiliated with. I didn't understand that the objective of the school system was to implicitly assimilate the Native people so we would no longer know who we were and that we would take on only the values of the dominant society.

In my journey I have learned the traditional culture of a society is what ensures its unity and survival. The values, beliefs, history and customs form the basis of the attitudes, behaviours, and understandings that make up the heritage that individuals learn. Although a living culture is constantly changing and adapting to situations encountered, it still contains principles that are intrinsic to a particular group of people and to the identity of those people.

The relationship to Mother Earth is one of the manifestations of spirituality. It doesn't matter what our faith system is; it is the relationship to every thing around us that is important to our spiritual well being and the way we reveal that relationship. Parents and extended family are an influential aspect of a person's identity.

As stated earlier the creator gave each nation a language that was to be passed on to each succeeding generation. In this language is the worldview that helps to define the identity of the individual of that group.

Elders are another integral part of the Aboriginal society. These people have lived a long life and therefore have much knowledge to share with the younger generations of people.

Traditional culture, land, spirituality, family, language and elders are important aspects of Aboriginal identity. And as Elder Art Solomon said, “In the course of history there came a disruption” and then another way was brought. This way consisted of Government institutions, residential schools, prejudice, education, church, and the media. And the land was taken for the purposes of immigration, greed and exploitation.

In August 1986, at Sudbury during the 31st General Council of the United Church of Canada, the moderator made an apology to the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. It was a powerful event to witness. I remember Rev. Stan McKay, a Cree minister, gave an eloquent teaching from the pulpit. He said in words to this effect, “Once there was this little old woman and this little old man living in a beautiful house. One day a person from another place came to visit them and they welcomed him into their home. He stayed and stayed until one day some of his relatives
came also. They stayed. These visitors kept inviting more people to the house until finally the old man and women were living on the veranda of the house because there was no more room inside. The visitors occupied the whole house. The old man and woman kept saying to themselves "when are these people going to leave so we can move back into our house." As they were settling in on the veranda another group of relatives of the first visitors arrived and the little man and little women were pushed off the veranda into the bog that was surrounding the house.”

Rev. Stan McKay then stated “We will go down to the bog to wait.” One by one the Aboriginal people got up and left the congregation to follow Stan to the bog. On the bog was a tepee where the Elders waited for the apology. In the centre of the bog was a sacred Fire and beside the sacred Fire were the drummers. The atmosphere was quiet. People were visiting with each other. Eventually we saw hundreds of candle lights coming down the hill. This contingent was lead by the Moderator who proceeded to the Tepee where the Elders awaited. The Moderator read the following communication to the Elders.

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation, and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich and to be treasured.

We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.

We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.

We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel.

We tried to make you like us and in doing so we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred and we are not what we meant by God to be.

We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God’s creation healed.

The people came out of the Tepee and there was joyfulness throughout the bog. Our people suppressed by the church for so many years pulled out their shawls and button blankets and danced crying and singing around the sacred fire to the beat of the drums. In their joy they invited the other people to join them in the release from suffocating oppression.

The church and state have supported each other in their approach to get the Aboriginal people to become ‘citizens’ of Canada. The church used the Residential Schools to assimilate and the government used the Indian Act.

The Euro-western laws that governed the relationship with the Aboriginal people embodied and still embody the arrogant and racist attitudes that were the colonial norm in the early nineteenth century (Richardson 1993:50) writes, “To put it bluntly, the authorities who formulated these
policies were contemptuous of [A]boriginals, and determined that they should not interfere with the process of European settlement.”

**Effects of the Indian Act**

This Act relegated the Indigenous people of Canada to the status of minors, and treated them as wards of the state (Richardson 1993:50). After the 1885 Métis rebellion the centralizing tendencies of the federal administration of Indian Affairs increased and continued until 1951. Dickason (1992) states that, “The department assumed more and more control over the lives of Amerindians, until they did not have a free hand even in such personal matters as writing a will…(p.319).”

She says, “As the power of the agents [people employed by the Department of Indian Affairs to make sure the Indian people followed the rule of the government policy in regards to Indian people in Canada] grew, it became steadily more arbitrary. Their duties accrued until they were expected to direct farming operations; administer relief in times of necessity; inspect schools and health conditions on reserves; ensure that department rules and provisions were complied with; and preside over band council meetings and in effect, direct the political life of the band.”

Smith (1993 p.38) states that Aboriginal people were “guinea pigs in a deliberate experiment in social engineering that went disastrously wrong.” He says, “It was a strategy mounted by Church and State to undermine the foundations of the societies that once flourished here. … a way station on the road to becoming brown-faced white people.”

In 1920, Duncan Campbell Scott, deputy superintendent of the Indian department, again amended the Indian Act to strengthen compulsory school attendance to make sure that all Native children between the ages of seven and fifteen attended school. It was in 1920 that Scott told a House of Commons committee, “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. …Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question.” (Smith 1993 p.38) Smith states that the official national policy was *no more Indians* (emphasis mine).

So we can see why the notion of Canadian citizenship has been a contentious issue for Aboriginal Peoples of Canada because the underlying values and intentions of integration/assimilation into Canadian society meant forsaking Aboriginal heritages. While Aboriginal peoples may not object to living within Canadian Society the objections are to the process of forsaking Aboriginal identity: heritage, language and spirituality in order to be a ‘Canadian Citizen’.

**References**


Addressing Multicultural Issues in Teacher Education: Experiences from Pakistan

Dilshad Ashraf, Jan-e-Alam Khaki, Duishon Shamatov, Mir Afzal Tajik, and Nilofar Vazir

OISE/UT and Aga Kahn University

Background
The AKU-IED was established in 1993 to counteract the “continued deepening decline in the quality, effectiveness, relevance and outreach of education systems in Pakistan and elsewhere in the developing world in the face of growing numbers of children and shrinking resources” (A Proposal to the Board of Trustees, AKU-IED, 1991, p.6). The focus of AKU-IED is to address “irrelevant curricula compounded by ineffective assessment which in turn fostered rote learning and passive student roles” (Phase 2 Proposal, AKU-IED, 1997) by improving the performance of teachers through professional development and school improvement.

The philosophical underpinnings of the teacher education initiatives at the AKU-IED are to promote critical reflection, innovative approaches, and action research, in a pluralistic and multicultural environment (Khan, 2002). The AKU-IED promotes and practices multiculturalism by being non-denominational in its outlook. It draws heavily on knowledge from the West and the East, by fostering a symbiotic relationship with many universities around the world, such as McMasters, Harvard, Oxford, Sheffield Hallam, Toronto, and many others. This reflects the focus of the University of fostering multiculturalism and pluralism in an effort to learn from and help enrich other cultures (Aga Khan, 1983). The University draws its inspiration from the great traditions of Islamic learning rooted in the traditions of the Holy Prophet of Islam - Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) - when he said “Search for knowledge, even if you have to go to China”. This was said at a time when China was seen as the farthest place during the seventh century (Nakosteen, 1975).

The Programmes at the AKU-IED
AKU-IED’s overall focus is on improving the performance of teachers and other stakeholders through professional development and leading school improvement through a planned, systemic approach (Wheeler, 1999). Various in-service programmes are offered for teachers and educators.

Master of Education in Teacher Education
A major programme at AKU-IED is the two-year M.Ed. Programme in Teacher Education. The course participants of the M.Ed. programme are mid-career schoolteachers from seven developing countries in Central Asia, East Africa and South Asia. They represent both government and private institutions. They bring together their varied educational and life experiences, creating the unique culture of AKU-IED. They also bring together their diverse religious, ethnic, cultural and racial backgrounds. The chief objective of the two-year full-time M.Ed. programme is to prepare a cadre of experienced mid-career teacher educators, educational leaders, and researchers to serve as change agents. By better understanding the principles and processes of educational change in their own contexts they can help to create a learning culture
in their institutions. Course participants reflect on educational and broader issues and learn to become more proactive addressing the issues they face. They are introduced to broader societal changes that take place around them such as the democratization of the political order and the globalization of the world economy. In order to achieve the objectives of the course, the course participants work with each other cooperatively and in a collegial environment.

At the AKU-IED, course participants go through intensive learning experiences. They are encouraged to critically examine their educational theories and practices. Social skills are stressed to promote tolerance and sensitivity to differing and opposing ideas and thoughts. Most of the course participants report that they go through transformational learning experiences at the AKU-IED. The graduates of the M.Ed. programme work in conjunction with graduates of other programmes in the same schools. they learn the skills needed to bring about a significant shift in the quality of teaching and learning in the selected institutions from which they are drawn.

**The Visiting Teacher (VT) Programmes**

The first eight-week Visiting Teacher (VT) Programme was initiated in October 1995 and since then the programme has experienced considerable revision and development in accordance with experiences gained at AKU-IED. This programme has proven to be highly resilient and has the flexibility to enhance classroom practice in a wide variety of contexts. The VT programmes are subject specific, and offered in Social Studies, English, Mathematics, Science and Primary Education, and are conducted on an annual, cyclic basis. Participants for VT programmes are drawn from different parts of East Africa and Central and South Asia representing developing countries in the region. The teachers who attend VT programmes then return to their home institutions to work with other colleagues.

In accordance with the evolutionary nature of the AKU-IED programmes, a Subject Specialist Teacher (SST) Programme was developed in response to expressed needs both by those who had taken the VT programme, and those conducting the programme, to strengthen the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge base in their respective subject areas. The SST programmes are field-based, with teachers attending regular seminars and workshops during the annual holiday and on selected Saturdays throughout the year. The programme content is treated in greater depth than that covered in the prerequisite VT programme.

**Educational Management Programmes**

The field of educational management and leadership is now critically examining the role of school heads management/ leading school effectively. The key role of school heads in making an effective school has been substantiated by a considerable body of research (see Leithwood, Jantazi, and Steinbach, 2000; Khaki, 2003). This is consistent with the overall philosophy of AKU-IED toward school improvement. To address the issues facing head teachers on a much more systematic and professional basis, an Advanced Diploma In School Management (ADISM) Program was developed in collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University in the U.K. ADISM is an attempt to provide professional development for school heads in the much-needed area of school management, and to introduce formal recognition and the opportunity for career development at this level (Memon and Wheeler, 2000; Memon, 2002). Directed toward the professional development of serving and/or aspiring head teachers/ departmental heads for the different sectors of cooperating schools, including government schools and private schools and
the community sectors, it is field-based, practicum driven. The program is episodic, in that it is held on Saturdays, and twice a year for two weeks during the long holidays of summer and winter for longer and sustained workshops, as participants cannot leave their schools while they are open (Memon, 1999). Other related courses in the general field of educational management have also been developed in accordance with the evolving nature of the overall school improvement initiative which underlies AKU-IED’s mandate. They have been incorporated in the M. Ed. courses as well. All the educational management programmes are designed to help heads foster their leadership skills so that they can work as catalysts and professional development support agents in their schools. It may be noted that as a professional development opportunity this is a pioneering initiative in the private sector in Pakistan.

The Diverse Backgrounds of Course Participants
The course participants of the AKU-IED programmes come from developing countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. They bring together divergent educational and life experiences. Their working backgrounds vary from government schools to private to community-run and / or NGO schools. They speak many languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, Tajik, Swahili, Pashtu, Balochi, English, Kyrgyz, Bengali, Sindhi, Khowar, Shina, Persians, Wakhi and Burasheski.

Religious / ideological, cultural backgrounds
The course participants represent various religious and ideological backgrounds. There were course participants who were Christians and Muslims. Even within those religions, people come from various and often conflicting sects. The home contexts varied from very religious in some remote areas to post-communist where there was atheistic dogma for over 70 years. There was a wide range of ethnic cultural representation as well. The course participants brought together their rich cultures. Their dress, food, language, and ways of life differed, and it often required great effort from the course participants to be tolerant and sensitive of each other’s cultures. Even within Pakistan, people are from different regions, representing various ethnic and cultural groups.

Age and Gender
The course participants’ ages varied from mid 20s to mid 50s. Both male and female course participants were enrolled in the programmes, and their joint experiences stretched from attending classes together to living in the hostel to commuting from hostel to the institute to spending free time socializing together. This was especially challenging because many participants came from contexts where male-female interactions are very limited.

Educational background
Most of the course participants come from school contexts which can be characterized as “traditional”. They reported how they had suffered when they were students because of authoritarian teachers. Some teachers even used corporal punishment in their practices. One of the course participants1 stated:

When I was a child I was a regular student, but one day I could not submit my assignment on time. After three or four days I brought my assignment to my teacher. But she was

1 Quotes of Participants 1-4 hereafter are from Shamatov’s (1998) study with course participants of the M.Ed. programme.
furious, and she said to me ‘You are late!’ She did not even listen to my reason. Later I saw her beat another student for submitting an assignment late. I was very afraid of her, so what I did was I just traced (copied) her signature and put it in my copybook. And believe me, she ... perhaps she was in a hurry... she did not notice that it was not her signature. But that is how I saved myself from punishment.

Another course participant also shared her experiences of encountering a teacher who was a threatening figure.

The teacher used to make us stand first, and then he would read a question and would tell us to respond. We would respond standing. He did it because he did not want us to write anything in our copybooks. While we were standing no one was allowed to touch a pen at all. But one day I unconsciously touched my pen, as it usually happens with children. We liked to play with things, but I was slapped hard on my face. Since then I developed a sort of fear of that teacher.

As teachers-practitioners, most of the course participants taught as their teachers used to teach them. Although some of them did not want to copy some of the actions and strategies of teachers they did not like. But they were constrained due to various limitations including systemic barriers. As one of the course participants stated, he wanted to work honestly and teach the students to learn and not to be involved in any unfair practices. He was very enthusiastic about working well. He said,

When I newly joined my service, I failed many students, because they submitted failing papers. They could not give me the answers that I was demanding. 60 out of 75 students failed. After assessment I went home and came back... Then what happened? All the students who were failed were sitting in the class again... I came to know that there were one or two big bosses at that school. He got bribes, clothes, and watches. He did the final paper results and declared all the students had passed. I was shocked. What had I done? Now the students were angry with me. If I passed them with my own hands it would be more beneficial for them and for myself in my future services. I was well prepared to do the things honestly, but after this incident I changed my attitude. Whatever others were doing I will also do. I became a part of the system. The next year I started “passing them”. I said to them “OK. If you pay your tuition you can pass.” That is how I was majboor (obliged) to adapt to the system.

Experiences of the Course Participants at AKU-IED
At the AKU-IED, the course participants go through a very intensive learning process, and they are encouraged to critically examine their educational philosophies, classroom practices, and value systems. Course participants were encouraged to reflect on their previous practices, and change their theories and practices from traditional to progressive approaches. They learned to ‘unfreeze’ conceptual frameworks with which they operated. The ‘unfreezing’ process started a ‘reconceptualization’ of what was involved in teaching and learning, and resulted in the CPs’ beginning to examine critically some of their traditional views of education and of educational practices. Along with reconceptualizing their teaching and learning notions and practices, the course participants reported they had to alter their worldview while they were at AKU-IED.
In addition to reconceptualization of teaching and learning ideas from ‘teacher-centered’ to ‘learner-centered’ approaches, the course participants were encouraged to develop collegial relationships with other each other, and upon graduating from the institute they become change agents who improve schools by building strong collegial learning communities. Different cultural, religious (including sectarian), gender and race backgrounds of course participants posed tremendous challenges to almost everyone who has been involved in the programmes. Cultural diversity, however, was viewed as a strength, not as a problem to be dealt with. The following comments illustrate the profound changes that occurred in the course participants while attending the courses at AKU-IED.

**Course participant 1**

You see I came from a place where people do not value ideas, but they value status, they value who you are. For example, there is a saying in my language, let the king’s son speak even if his mouth is crooked. But now I have changed entirely. It is like from one side to another. These were two extremes, I was on the one side and then I was taken around to another side...

**Course participant 2**

I would not say that I was a very religious person before coming to IED, but I became kind of “secular” here. I started to think that everybody has a right to live irrespective of which religion they belong to. I stopped discriminating against people on the basis of religion, color, and cast. Whether you are a follower of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Judaism. Whether you are a Jew, or a Christian or worship idols! Everybody has faith. Everybody has a right to have their own ideas and their ideas should be respected.

The AKU-IED’s progress (see findings from the course participants’ and faculty members’ (Ashraf, 1998; Khaki, 2003; Shamatov & Vazir, 2003; Tajik 2003; Tajik, 2001; Vazir, 1998; Wheeler et al 2000; Abdulalishoev, 2000; Maksutova, 1999; Kirmani, 1999; Yusufi, 1998; Safdar, 2001; Khan, 2002) research studies) indicated that there have been remarkable changes in the course participants’ practices and behaviours. It also reaffirms AKU-IED’s commitment to teachers and students by creating an environment, which fosters intellectual stimulation within the community.

The course participants and faculty members of the AKU-IED have experienced varying degrees of cultural transformation and value orientations while attending the programme. Three factors are widely reported to be significant in the participants’ shifts in thinking. They are: the enabling institutional environment, the nature of instructional strategies used by the faculty members, and modeling of faculty members which altogether made demonstrable differences in the outlook, beliefs, and behaviours of the course participants as far as their practice and understanding are concerned.

The majority of the course participants reported they got along together very well, and there were several significant factors that contributed to this including the friendly environment of the institute, the unending support of faculty members and administrative staff, and living together in
The course participants helped each other by sharing their ideas and working together to improve their practices. Many people pointed to the unusual climate of AKU-IED, which was very friendly, and supportive. “People here respect each other and their ideas. This supportive environment helped us to act accordingly”, were amongst common responses.

Course participant 3
AKU-IED’s culture is quite unique... People respect each other. They value ideas, and are open to suggestions. In addition everyone here is equal. You call even the director by his first name. The context where I come from I could not stand, let alone sit in front of the director. If director is coming I am supposed to stand up, even if I am working. I have to leave all my work and stand up out of respect for his high position, …‘the director is coming’...

Course participant 4
The thing that struck me here was the respect for everyone. You sit with faculty members and eat in the cafeteria. They joke with you and ask you to call them by their names. That is how I developed my self-esteem and confidence.

The first director of the AKU-IED, Dr Kazim Bacchus stated that one way for the faculty members to set an example of collegiality with the course participants was through fostering a less rigidly hierarchical relationship with them. This, however, was not always easy to achieve in a society where Hosfstedt (1980) calls “power distance” a dominant attitude. The institutional context of AKU-IED creates an enabling and culturally conducive environment to help course participants to bring forward diverse views without fear of being judged by others; and to help them explore alternative theories, beliefs, skills, values and attitudes. The university administration and faculty members created this enabling environment. It is heartening to say that it seems to foster a comfortable learning and teaching environment in which participants can express their views and dilemmas over change and stability.

Summary
The course participants go through exceptionally challenging experiences at AKU-IED while attending in-service teacher education programmes because of their very traditional educational backgrounds as well as because of the conjunction of rich and diverse social, religious, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. After graduating from AKU-IED, they return to their home contexts to bring about changes in educational and broader spheres. Despite all the challenges, tensions and issues they had faced, many course participants report that the learning at AKU-IED has been a major milestone - paradigmatic shift for many - in their personal and professional lives. One among many reasons identified by the participants is the “friendly, status free, collegial, conducive, and encouraging” environment”. Others named “team work, and the exchange of ideas” (AKU-IED, 2000, p.52). Diversity has been used as a strength, and as an opportunity for learning from each other. It has enriched the AKU-IED. Due to great demand in many developing countries, as well as in regions within Pakistan, the AKU-IED has established two professional development centers to offer in-service teacher education, which is contextually relevant and sensitive. Thus, the AKU-IED has started addressing educational change issues in a multicultural milieu of a developing country context with ambitious objectives. We, as faculty members of the institution, note significant signs in educational development both in urban and
rural school settings in Pakistan, as well in other countries where the AKU-IED is helping. Noting the progress of AKU-IED, Terry Boak, vice President Academic, Brock University, and the SIDP/CIDA in his draft appraisal, described the success of the AKU-IED in these words: “by all measures IED has been extremely successful, surpassing all expectations, and CIDA/SIDP can be proud of its support for, and association with, AKU-IED” (AKU-IED, 2000a, P.9).

References

Aga Khan (1983). Speech upon the acceptance of the charter of the Aga Khan from the President of Pakistan.


Introduction

The paper is structured in three sections. In the first section, a selected literature review is presented as what do I mean by critical citizenship and how can it be possibly be connected with mathematics education. The second section is exclusively focusing on linking mathematics education with critical citizenship. The last section will be dealing with the work of Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) in the context of Pakistan in terms of developing mathematics teachers in putting the link into practice. Recommendations for future work are also given at the end of the paper.

Defining Critical Citizenship

Notion of citizenship is contested one. There is no single definition that can capture the whole entirety of the term in general and within the context of Pakistan. However, there are some of the aspects associated with the concept of citizenship that one can consider while talking about it:

- Social Justice: fairness, equity, responsible action etc in the context of Pakistan and beyond
- Inquiry into issues: racism, inequality in different dimensions (human rights violation etc), poverty etc.
- Democracy: proportionate representations, polling, and population and etc
- Appropriate conceptualisation of the notion of citizenship within the context of Pakistan
- Need to understand complex interplay of the situations, which necessitates the need to realize the goal of creating critical citizenship within the context of Pakistan. These situations may include free flow of information through various media, which may necessitate the need for critical appraisal and evaluation of the available information and take an active part in the production and disseminating the information to wider public.


*The worker in the new work-order should be equipped with the skills to deal with multi-modal texts (sounds, graphics, images and print) created by new digital technologies.---students should be taught how to construct, control, consume and manipulate the wider repertoire of texts that will proliferate in the new work-place and everyday discourses.*

- The media are central to the political process in modern societies; and media education—teaching about the media—could become a highly significant site in defining future possibilities for citizenship. If, as Rob Gilbert (1992) implies, the struggle for citizenship is partly a struggle over the ‘means and substance of cultural expression’—and particularly over those which are made available by the electronic media—it is essential that the school curriculum should enable young people to become actively involved in the media culture that surrounds them. From this perspective, a media education is not confined to
analyzing the media—much less to some mechanistic notion of ‘critical viewing skills’. On the contrary, it aims to encourage young people’s critical participation as cultural producers in their own right. (Buckingham, David. 1999, p.182)

- Develop competencies and tools to play an active role in responding to the increasing complexities enacted in the process of variety of human interactions and networking in the processes of meeting diverse needs throughout the world.
- Getting prepared to participate democratically in the process of influencing the world where one works in a more productive fashion. This demand of interacting diverse set of people and conflicting opinions can encourage citizens to get equipped with the necessary set of knowledge, skills and dispositions which can facilitate him/her to become assertive in today’s dynamic and interdependent world.
- ...problems that one encounter in the work place may not necessarily be discipline bound, but may call for skills and knowledge that cut across disciplines boundaries. Therefore, problem solving in real life requires ‘dialectical thought which crosses and goes beyond any one discipline and is inherently multilogical. (Paul, 1994, 363).

In Pakistan, school curriculum also seemed to have been structured with technical orientation; goals of the curriculum translated into the textbooks and the classrooms were conceived of as mere delivery of the canonical facts and procedures of in a religious manner. There was hardly a room for the students and teachers to ask any question and get engaged themselves in the process of challenging the basis of the curriculum with changing needs; they were only encouraged to accumulate the information rather than developing greater understanding of the issues or topics that they were developing during the process learning the knowledge given in the sacred textbooks. For example for the promotion of critical citizenship, it appears to be extremely useful that an environment should be created in the country so that citizens become aware of their roles and responsibilities but also raise the critical issues related to their positioning within the society. The critical citizens would not come from vacuum. Right from the education from the schools to the higher education, the students should be prepared to become critically literate of the issues they would be facing in the fast changing world but become actively engaged into the process of shaping a meaningful life. Morgan (1997) outlines the importance of critical literacy as:

> Critical Literacy encourages students to challenge taken-for-granted meanings and ‘truth’ about a way of thinking, reading and writing the world. It works against the notion that meaning is transparent, neutral and unproblematic. Critical literacy also questions the neutrality of power relations within the discourses. In pedagogic terms, students should be encouraged to develop enquiring minds that question the cultural and ideological assumptions underwriting any text. They also learn to investigate the politics of representation in the discourse, interrogate the unequal power relations embedded in texts and become astute readers of the ways texts position speakers and readers within discourse (Morgan, 1997, p 259).

**Linking Mathematics Education with Critical Citizenship**

Often mathematics has been conceived of as a neutral discipline having nothing to do with the social activities of human, despite of the fact that it is one of the products of the human
enterprise. It receives a lot of attention. To Plato mathematics represents the ultimate truth or only mathematical principles can lead us to discover the truth. This infallible characterization of mathematics has in one hand led mathematicians to invent complicated symbolic language to handle complex models of human thoughts, on the other hand, it created rooms for conceiving mathematics as only for gifted people. In consequence, a socially constructed fear was created and sustained.

This fear towards mathematics kept a large majority of learners away from learning worthwhile mathematics that they could have used to make themselves empowered to tackle variety of issues related to their social life such as making decision as whether they need to go mortgage for housing and which interest scheme is suitable and which is not; which credit card scheme is useful and which is not. This raises the importance of viewing mathematics education in relation to its role with wider society and as how this relationship can play role in distributing powers among different sections of society. In this regard, it appears essential to look at mathematics education from the perspective of linking mathematics with the need of creating a critical citizenship in today’s’ complex society due to processes of globalizations and frequent flow of information.

Ole Skovsmose and Nielson (1996) have identified the following elements which can help us to see the link of mathematics with critical citizenship:

- Citizenship identifies schooling as including the preparation of students to be an active part of political life
- Mathematics may serve as a tool of identifying and analyzing critical features of society, which may be global as well as having to do with the local environment of students.
- The students’ interest emphasizes that the main focus of education cannot be the transformation of (pure) knowledge; instead educational practice must be understood in terms of acting persons.
- Culture and conflicts raise basic questions about discrimination. Does mathematics education reproduce inequalities, which might be established by factors outside education but, nevertheless, are reinforced by educational practice?
- Mathematics itself might be problematic because of the function of mathematics as part of modern technology, which no longer can be reviewed with optimism. Mathematics is not only a tool for critique but also an object of critique.
- Critical mathematics education concentrates on life in the classroom to the extent that the communication between teacher and student can reflect power relations.

Within this context, if one look at the possibility of how can Mathematics contribute towards catering to the needs of critical citizenship, one can find that mathematics has remained a very useful body of knowledge which has helped her/him to only study the processes of social interactions in logical fashion but has also helped her/him to gain broader picture of his/her positioning in the world. In this regards, it is worthwhile to quote OECD study (1999), which outlines the mathematical literacy as:

The capacity to identify, to understand and engage in mathematics and make well founded judgments about the role that mathematics plays, as needed for an individuals’
current and future private life, occupational life, social life with peers and relatives, and life as a constructive, concerned and reflective citizen. (OECD, 1999, p. 12)

It is also worthwhile to note that the OECD defines citizens’ participation in the affairs of the state as:

‘Participate’ include social, cultural and political engagement. Participation may include a critical stance, a step toward personal liberation, emancipation and empowerment. The term ‘society’ includes economic and political as well as social and cultural life. One purpose of critical literacy is ‘problematic classroom and public texts’ (OECD, 1999, p.12).

While reviewing the book entitled Towards Philosophy of Critical Mathematics Education by Ole Skovsmos (1994), Professor Paul Ernest (1996) see the three role that a critically mathematics education seemed to be playing:

A radical view of the relevance of mathematics, and consequently of the aims of mathematics teaching, is that it should foster critical mathematics literacy and empower students to become critical citizens in modern society. Critical mathematical literacy involves a number of components that need to be unpacked. First, it necessitates having a sound knowledge and understanding of a significant subset of school mathematics. Second, it involves the confident possessions of the process skills of applying mathematical knowledge independently to pose and solve problems in a wide variety of contexts; in finding out any missing facts or acquiring any skills needed in the process; and in evaluating solutions critically. Third, it necessitates the ability to identify, interpret, evaluate, and critique the mathematics embedded in social and political systems and claims, from advertisements and government pronouncements to the means of the means of the decision-making and the distribution of the resources employed in the society. (Paul Ernest, 1996, p. 1)

He further says

The goal of critical mathematics literacy is the empowerment of learners both as individuals and as citizens-in-society. This is achieved by developing mathematical power both to overcome barriers to higher education and employment and thereby to increase economic self-determination; and to foster critical awareness and democratic citizenship via mathematics. Ultimately, the aim is social change via the empowerment of the citizenry towards participating more fully in and subsequently working towards a more just and democratic society. (Paul Ernest, 1996, p. 1)

Skovsmose(1998:196) has also outlined key tenets as how mathematics education can be closely linked with critical citizenship:

…democracy concerns not only question of governing of state but of institutions of any kind. Furthermore, “ruling” presupposes “citizenship” involving a variety of forms of “participation”. Thus, “democracy” comes to mean “a way of life”. This brings us to the notion of deliberative democracy which “ refers to the idea that legitimate lawmaking issues from the public deliberations of citizens” (Bohman and Rehg(Eds.), 1997, p.ix)
… Mathematics education for democracy means learning about the local community of which you are part a member. Such learning may provide citizenship. Learning for democracy does not only mean learning about constitutions, rules for election, etc. It means being involved in democratic processes (p. 198)

Citizenship does not only imply being ready to live in and face the “output” from authorities. It also means providing an “input” to authority, a ‘talking back to authority’. Education for citizenship, therefore, presupposes participation. …[Also] citizenship can also be analyzed in more theoretical terms, one of these is “empowerment”, another is Mudigkeit. The Mundigkeit can be given specific interpretation, such as the students being able to participate in political discussions taking place in a local community. And, most important, Mundigkeit also includes competence in investigating decisions with mathematically formulated arguments (pp. 198-199).

Other important areas where mathematics seemed to be playing an important part are:
- Application of Mathematical ideas in daily life situation
- Enhancement of Mathematical Thinking
- Developing Problem Solving skills
- Creative Problem Solving
- Modeling
- Active search for relationships
- Statistical analysis

**Contribution of Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) in Pakistan**

The Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) is one of those professional associations that has been playing a role in terms of helping mathematics teachers and educators to create a culture of doing and investigating mathematics in Pakistan. MAP came into being on July 4, 1997, after initiatives taken by the participants of a 3-week workshop organized under the International Academic Partnership of the Aga Khan Foundation and the Philips Academy (USA) at The Aga Khan University, Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED).

The main aim of MAP has been to promote a culture of doing and investigating mathematics among teachers and students by creating more opportunities for conceptual understanding or relational understanding (Skemp, R. 1982) as opposed to rote learning of facts and concepts in mathematics (instrumental understanding). Further to this aim, MAP has provided a forum for teachers meet to with each other on a regular basis to discuss the issues relevant to the subject matter, with strategies to deliver it to students in ways that encourage the students to take a keen interest in learning mathematics.

Now it is also being recognized by all the concerned stakeholders of the education system that the networking in the form of the Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) can prove to be one of the viable strategies to help both schools and mathematics teachers to create meaningful learning experiences for students on a sustained and regular basis; MAP can also provide a more
sustainable platform for enhancement of teachers’ professional development with its quality programmes on a regular and on-going basis.

The evaluations done by the participants of various workshops of MAP organized for the professional development of teachers and students suggest that a significant change seems to take place in the perceptions of teachers and students at their schools about the nature of teaching and learning mathematics. Now they seem to be considering doing mathematics as a human activity rather than as a body of only factual knowledge to be memorized and produced; they consider mathematics as a “subject to be created” rather than a “created subject” (Freudenthal, 1978, p.72).

Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) has also designed a comprehensive strategy to deal with the issue of making learning of mathematics as a meaningful and worthwhile activity for learners at all levels. This strategy entails a three-prong approach. First it has decided to create a forum for mathematics teachers to meet regularly and discuss important issues related to their teaching and learning mathematics with an eye on drawing implications for their own classrooms. This was achieved through the monthly meetings of mathematics teachers on first Saturday of every month. The topics of the discussions were selected in a way that the teachers would develop an interdisciplinary approach towards learning mathematics.

For example, the mathematics teachers were invited to reflect on as how mathematics can be connected with the critical citizenship. In this vein, the participants were encouraged to reflect on what were the mathematical structure as a citizen either they are using to facilitate their work, work may be of occupational or may be of using as an individual. For example, they were invited to reflect on the question why do they pay6 taxes and how much do they tax. How do the government come up to formula of determining taxes. In this regard, Davis and Hersh (1988) have clearly outlined the spaces where mathematics is playing the role of prescriptive power in shaping up our realities:

"we are born into a world with so many instances of prescriptive mathematics in place that we are hardly aware of them, and, they are pointed out, we can hardly imagine the world working without them. Our measurements of space and mass, our clocks and calendars, our plan for buildings and machines, our monitory system, are prescriptive mathematization of great antiquity. To focus on recent instances… Think of the income tax. This is an enormous mathematical structure superposed on an enormous pre-existing mathematical financial structure…In American society, there are plentiful examples of recently reinstated prescriptive mathematization: exam grades, IQ’s, life insurance, taking a number in a bake shop, lotteries, traffic lights… telephone switching systems, credit cards, zip codes, proportional representation voting…We have prescribed these systems, often for reasons known only to a few; they regulate and alter our lives and characterize civilization. They create a"
Second, MAP has been very active in organizing purpose-oriented programmes for children. For example, Math Olympiad has assumed a greater significance among the schools in terms of encouraging students to work on non-routine mathematical problems. The Math Olympiad was not designed to promote competition among students and schools. But it was structured in a way that students were put into different groups where it was ensured that not more than two students from school sit together. Then children were invited to participate in the Olympiad in a way that team should be winner rather an individual student. This opportunity for students to work together encouraged them to cooperate and also understand the learning needs of others. Math Olympiad has generated a tremendous interest among students. Now MAP is planning to take this initiative to the National Level and also considering as how can best the programmes such as Math Olympiad help students to see the significance of mathematics vis-à-vis their assuming their as critical citizens.

Third, MAP is creating a space for adults who have not got an opportunity to learn mathematics in a more formal manner or those who have not achieved their qualifications in mathematics. In this regard, MAP has organized programme for parents. In the workshop, the parents were invited to see as how mathematics can be useful in their day today affairs. Also parents were invited to reflect on as how can they improve their mathematical knowledge so that they can be better prepared to cater to the merging needs of their children in an effective manner.

Overall our work through Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) has led us to the formulation of the following guiding principles to put the link between Mathematics Education and Critical Citizenship:

- demystifying the fear towards learning of mathematics
- looking mathematics as a subject to be created not created subject
- situating learner of mathematics within the broader society
- bringing deliberation and negotiation in the discourse of mathematics as against the certitude of mathematical knowledge

Also the work of Mathematics Association of Pakistan (MAP) has suggested us that we should continuing work in the contexts of Pakistan and beyond. Our work will be mainly focused to create avenues for citizens of Pakistan in

- supporting efforts of creating an environment where taken-for-granted be challenged
- bringing abuses/uses of mathematics to public scrutiny
- creating reflective knowledge of mathematics(Skovsmose, 1993)
- linking learning of mathematics with emancipation e.g. developing skills of learners to understand and challenge the lies of statistics
- supporting citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities: enabling them to become good at deciphering the hidden codes of mathematics and developing arrays of possibilities for future action

*description before the pattern itself exists’ (Davis and Hersh, 1988, pp. 120-121).*
Conclusion
This paper is part of my efforts to actively seek and enact link between mathematics education and critical citizenship not only in the context of Pakistan but also supporting efforts working towards realization of this link in other parts of the world. I believe that this link will make mathematics as a more humane subjects as other subjects are. Mathematics and mathematics education will support us to become more caring and critical citizen in the world, as it gets more complex due to free flow of information and mobility and interactions of humans across the globe.

References:


sikunder.baber@aku.edu; sikunder@hotmail.com
Participatory Democracy in Education: The Role of the School Trustee

_Luz Bascuñan_1

As the first Latin American elected to public office people often asked me why, after being elected in three consecutive elections, I didn’t run for more “prominent” higher status” political jobs. They did not seem to understand when I said the school trustee was the position that had the most impact in society.

In Ontario as in the rest of Canada, school boards and school trustees held a very important role in developing education policies that can influence important societal changes as the Alberta school Board Association points out: “Trusteeship means being partners with parents in ensuring that children, our greatest natural resource, are provided with the best possible educational opportunities to become the future citizens the community wishes them to be”.

Schooling is one of the most important activities that any community undertakes. The role of the trustee is to keep the positive image of schooling before the community, both to ensure that it is given a high priority by the public, and to keep the community aware of its accomplishments.

The trustee is a representative of the people; he/she is a decision-maker. The trustee is a policy-maker and a legislator. The trustee is responsible to the electorate through the democratic process. The trustee has the responsibility to ensure that education stays in step with today’s world and is ready for the world of tomorrow.

The trustee sets priorities in light of community wishes and sound educational practice. The trustee must ensure that policies are implemented in a fair and just manner and effective in achieving intended outcomes.

To sum up the trustee has the ability of increasing the overall level of democratic participation. The Latin American Student Leadership Camp of the Toronto School Board may help to illustrate this assertion. During my first term in office, just few months after been elected, a group of Latin American students attending secondary schools came to my office; they confirmed to me what I already knew: they felt isolated and alienated, they were doing poorly academically, they didn’t see their culture and values reflected in the school curriculum and they emphatically expressed that they wanted to change all that but didn’t know how to start. We decided to write a project proposal for the board involving the Board’s Equity Office, secondary schools, the students, Board staff of Latin American background and community advocates. To introduce the project to the Board, I used the Boards structure, that is, the sub-committees, committees, and standing committees of the Board. Thus the proposal came to the ESL committee, a committee that I chaired and moved to the School Programs (Standing) Committee.

Luz Bascuñan (B.A; B.ED, M.A, Ph.D candidate) is a former Public School Trustee with the Toronto Board of Education. She represented districts 11 and 12 of the former city of Toronto between 1990-1997.
and finally to the Board. This was difficult, as the left only had half of the vote and proposals loose on a tied vote; therefore, I had to get the support from the other political side—the Board right. The common interest in the beauty of Spanish as a language and the writings of Isabel Allende and Pablo Neruda provided me the two extra votes I needed, and as a result, the motion passed with the vote of the left and two right wing trustees.

The camp, the first one delivered in a specific language, Spanish, by trained Spanish-speaking educators was offered until the Board ceased to exist in 1997, and throughout these years it provided the students a best practice approach towards participatory democracy the board could offer. The students from one particular school were able to convince the school to create a new geography course: *Canadian geography viewed with Latin American eyes*, the course teacher was so influenced by all this process that the following year he took a teaching position in a high school in Chile. Another important result of the camp was the election of one of its graduates to the high profile position of President of the Toronto Association of Student Councils, the first Latin American Student ever elected in that position.

Mike Harris’ *Bill 104, the Fewer School Board Act* and *Bill 160 the Education Reform Act in 1997* destroyed this process of engagement of students, parents and communities. The first piece of legislation stripped local communities of the power to elect local trustees who are vested with real decision making roles; the later took away the power of district school boards to collect taxes and make financial decisions.

What were the reasons for the Harris’ government to make such drastic change in education governance? In Toronto school trustees were making policy decisions involving the community to bring crucial changes in education: For starters when parents in the Portuguese community realized that about 80% of their children had been placed in basic level secondary school programs, without the chance to pursue post-secondary education, Board trustees attempted to de-stream the secondary school programs so all children had the same opportunity to academic programs and receive the support required to choose an education path later on in school; schools and universities were engaged in the Steps to University Program in which children of Portuguese families could see themselves in post secondary education institutions and professions.

Basic level schools whose enrolment was largely Black students were dramatically changed as well. Black parents were actively engaged in discussion with trustees to develop antiracism and ethno cultural policies for the whole education system.

Immigrant parents whose first language was not English had policy and programs developed that promoted their involvement in school. Schools were becoming the hub of the community; parents speaking over 40 different languages had access to language programs, parent’s councils and committees that empowered their role; students had access to ESL programs during the day while their parents had access to day or evening ESL for adult courses. Students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds were valued in the form of having their first language taught during the

---

2 In addition to the fact that at that time this writer and these other two trustees were “members of the Board’s smoking caucus”.

46
school regular hours; the goals and timetables to include antiracist hiring of the board was in full force.

The empowerment of parents was a clear aspect of the board policy. Parents and the communities enjoyed been the active participant in the decision-making process. The traditional power structures of the system were rapidly changing.

The role of school trustees in helping to shape communities and the type of society we live is more understood by right wing government of what we often want to believe. For instance like Mike Harris and the Conservative government in Ontario in the last 7 years, the Military Junta and Pinochet in Chile during the seventies and eighties understood how schools influence social outcomes and the creating of the type of citizens who hold power in society.

I assert that this was the reasoning behind the education re-structuring of the Harris government: the policies of inclusion and participatory democracy in the Toronto school system had damaged the traditional foundation of the power structure, a dramatic change was required; a crisis had to be invented.

The new system emerging from bills 104 and 160 has nothing to do with parental involvement, equity in the classroom, inclusionary antiracist practices or a de-streamed system that promoted academic success for all students; the new vision for the school system required a return to the streamed education system, the one that would provide success to the few and cheap labour for the business partners from the less privileged ones. The focus became classroom instruction as the direct interaction of the teacher and the pupil in a vacuum. The new funding formula provided for that; huge amounts of dollars were taken away from Toronto schools (a loss of around $5,000 per pupil a year) but at the end it wasn’t the money (2 billion dollars cut to public schools in Toronto) it was the reforming of the system to what it was at the beginning: one that can bring success to the selected few while ensuring that there is cheap labour for the economic system to survive.

In conclusion, the Conservative government’s reform to the education system of Ontario, by eliminating the role of the local school trustee as a true decision-maker and via curtailing community involvement, in effect eliminated participatory democracy in the education system of the city of Toronto.
School science for citizen empowerment: Theoretical tools for subverting state-funded social engineering

John Lawrence Bencze
OISE/UT

INTRODUCTION

Particularly in recent years, governments’ stated intentions have been to help all students attain ‘scientific literacy’ (AAAS, 1989; 1993; CMEC, 1997; DfEE, 1999). Authors of the National Science Education Standards in the USA, for example, claim: “The intent of the Standards can be expressed in a single phrase: ‘Science standards for all students.’ The phrase embodies both excellence and equity” (NRC, 1996, p. 2; emphases added). Such literacy would, hopefully, enable learners to “thrive in the science-based world of the twenty-first century” (MoET, 1999b, p. 2).

Much of this may be rhetorical, however. Governments actually appear willing to sacrifice equity for the sake of excellence for a few. With enormous corporate funding, national and state (or provincial) political parties are increasingly more accountable to large corporations than to their electorate (Dobbin, 1998). Indeed, it seems citizens worldwide are increasingly experiencing governance without government—facilitated by international organizations like the IMF, the OECD, the G-7 and the World Bank (Rosenau, 1992)—as large corporations influence government policies in ways congruent with maximizing profit in highly competitive global markets (Dobbin, 1998). Apparently, “globalization in its contemporary forms is colonialism writ large, in that it is associated with the further and more complete spread of Western specific and especially Anglo-American specific language, economic practices, cultural forms and social relations” (Marginson, 1999, p. 23). Corporate influence is so pervasive, apparently, citizens in democracies have accommodated elements of corporatist lexicon into normal discourse; including terms and phrases such as: competition, individual responsibility, standardization, efficiency and accountability (Beyer, 1998; Dobbin, 1998). It is as if government constitutions have been occluded by a sort of ‘corporatist manifesto’ (Bencze, 2001a), a set of guiding principles designed to maximize corporate profit, including,

- commitment to market-based provision of services; encouragement of an individualized consumerist ethos; and a derisory view of the ‘nanny state.’

The result: a contraction of state funding for activities once thought of as ‘public’; a greater reliance on various forms of ‘user pays’ for services once funded through (progressive) tax systems; and the corporatisation or privatization of formerly public utilities. In this contemporary meaner and leaner state, new forms of governance have emerged in which consumer-citizens inhabit efficient, generically managed, performance-based institutions oriented towards the imperatives of the global marketplace (Henry et al., 1999, p. 88).

Consequently, governments have been compelled to use public schools to mold students in ways that might maximize corporate competitiveness (Dale, 1999). “As declared ‘allies of the state’ schools work as an ideological apparatus to ‘shape advantage’ for those who are in the best position to push the levers of capitalist accumulation” (McLaren and Baltodano 2000, p. 47). The NRC (1996, pp. 1-2) advises, for example, to “keep pace in global markets, the United States
needs to have an equally capable citizenry.” Guiding this economic ethic in schooling seems to have been publication of A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983), which clearly called on schools to “produce a steady source of workers” (Wood, 1998, p. 183). Its discourse is riddled with economic dread and military metaphors:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. … If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament (NCEE, 1983, p. 5; emphases added).

This document has inspired governments around the world, as each jurisdiction (in developed nations, especially) seeks economic prowess. Its language is easily discernable in Ontario’s curriculum, for example:

The new Ontario curriculum establishes high, internationally competitive standards of education for secondary school students across the province. The curriculum has been designed with the goal of ensuring that graduates from Ontario secondary schools are well prepared to lead satisfying and productive lives as both citizens and individuals, and to compete successfully in a global economy and a rapidly changing world (MoET, 2000, p. 3; emphases added).

Under this economic ethic, governments are mandated to develop curricula focusing on “the transmission of economically valuable skills and the grading and selection of learners for a hierarchy of economic roles” (Winter, 1998, p. 58). Consequently, it is becoming abundantly clear citizens in democracies are less and less able to self-determine their thoughts and actions. Increasingly, people are treated like ‘economic units,’ expected to play scripted roles in production-consumption cycles, primarily benefiting of an elite few. Indeed, we appear to be dominated by a “democratic-capitalist social order in which commodity fetishism, the rule of the market, patriarchy, and White supremacy constrain, distort, and oppress the expression of many individuals” humanity and their ability to act democratically” (Beyer, 1998, p. 260).

In this paper, after elaboration of factors in school science apparently contributing to this “democratic-capitalist social order,” some alternative perspectives and actions are discussed that educators might use for developing and implementing curricula in science that meet needs, interests, abilities and perspectives of all students in particular teaching and learning contexts.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING THROUGH SCHOOL SCIENCE

School science appears to have at least two major functions in service of the world’s economic elite. Through its production function, school science seems geared to generate potential scientists and engineers who may develop and manage mechanisms of production and consumption while, through its consumption function, it appears to develop citizens who may faithfully follow (‘consume’) centralized labour instructions and enthusiastically consume products and services of business and industry (Anderson and Cavanagh, 1996; Bencze, 2001a;
Longbottom and Butler, 1999; McNay, 2000). Accomplishing such social engineering on behalf of financiers of business and industry appears to involve at least seven factors, as listed in figure 1. Each of these is elaborated below.

**The Production Function**

Financiers of business and industry apparently benefit from a school system that regularly generates relatively small cohorts of “symbolic analysers [e.g., scientists and engineers]” (Reich, cited in Dobbin, 1998, p. 128)—i.e., those who can analyze and manipulate symbols, including words, numbers and visuals—who may develop and manage mechanisms of production and consumption of goods and services. School science seems overly geared towards identification and education of these potential professionals (Claxton, 1991), and it seems to operate through the first of seven factors for social engineering:

1. **Elitism** via **Abstraction**: To identify and educate the relatively few students who may choose careers in science and engineering, an efficient selection mechanism is needed. For that purpose, school *science* tends to take precedence over technology education—the latter often being stigmatized as only appropriate for “less able, concrete thinkers” (Fensham and Gardner, 1994, p. 168). Science, meanwhile, has long enjoyed high status associated with abstract thinking (McCulloch et al., 1985), status often perpetuated by academic scientists (Fensham, 1993). To help its case, school science often creates an “illusion of indispensability” (Bencze, 1995, p. 22-24) for professional science. Topics are sequenced from abstract to concrete, for example, thus misleadingly portraying technology “as the routine, tedious and menial application of the seminal products of pure science” (Layton, 1988, p. 369).

With its prominence in curricula secure, school science can focus on identifying potential scientists and engineers. Its selection criterion appears to be, to a great extent, students’ aptitude for processing *abstractions*—for quickly comprehending laws and theories (e.g., like the concept that a point mass occupies no space or that atoms do not actually touch when objects touch) in the absence of practical applications (MoET, 1999a, p. 13). Furthermore, teachers often use technical jargon, at the expense of understanding (Edwards and Mercer 1987). Because few students have sufficient *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1983)—derived from experiences with abstract talk and encouragement to read and access to new technologies (Henry et al. 1999), for example—to process these abstractions and jargon, school science often is a “survival of the richest” (Bencze, 2001a). It seems to be an *unnatural* selection, in which only the culturally rich survive. The *culture of power* survivors must possess includes a set of values, beliefs, ways of acting and being that unfairly and unevenly favour groups of people—mostly white, upper and middle class, male and heterosexual—to positions where they have more control over money, people, and societal values than culturally-impoverished peers (Delpit, 1988; Marginson, 1999). Similarly, Lemke (2001, p. 306) notes that our “curricula and teaching methods are … most

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Production Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>elitism via abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Consumption Function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conformity via standardization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>passivity via saturation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion via intensification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reverence via idealization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependence via regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disempowerment via isolation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
closely adapted to the needs of middle- and upper-middle-class, culturally North European-American, fluent speakers of prestige dialects of English.”

Consequently, students enrolling in school science, especially in secondary schools, may—paradoxically—find science education is more like one complex test than an education intended to enlighten and empower them. Indeed, in many jurisdictions, standards are being raised, as each corporate-friendly government imposes a “challenging new curriculum” (MoET, 1998, p. 3). Ironically, this may reduce attractiveness of careers in science and engineering. “Science is not terribly popular. It commands respect, but not affection” (Ogborn, 1996, p. 147). Such elitism is alarmingly problematic.

Thousands of years of human development and progress are reduced to the pursuit of ‘efficiency,’ our collective will is declared meaningless compared to the values of the marketplace, and communitarian values are rejected in favour of the survival of the fittest. A thinly disguised barbarism now passes for, is in fact promoted as, a global human objective (Dobbin, 1998, pp. 1-2).

The Consumption Function

According to Noble (1998, p. 281), corporations also can benefit from “a school system that will utilize sophisticated performance measures and standards to sort students and to provide a relatively reliable supply of … adaptable, flexible, loyal, mindful, expendable, ‘trainable’ workers for the twenty-first century.” School science appears to address this need through at least six mechanisms, through which it seems to function as an “apprenticeship for consumergership” (Bencze, 2001a); i.e., preparing students to be consumers, rather than producers, of knowledge:

2. **Conformity** via Standardization: A mantra of corporate-speak evident in government discourse is need for standardization in curriculum and instruction. This is purported to guarantee all students receive the same educational opportunities, regardless of their situation (AAAS, 1989, 1993; DfEE, 1999; NRC, 1996). The Ontario government, for example, has set measurable ‘standards’ (similar to ‘product specifications’) that apply province-wide (MoET, 1999a). Effects of such standardization, however, may be excessive conformity (Elkind, 1997). Indeed, “around the world, … science students are expected to construct scientific concepts meaningfully even when those concepts conflict with indigenous norms, values, beliefs, expectations, and conventional actions of students” life-worlds” (Aikenhead and Jegede, 1999, p. 270). It is apparent, “Eurocentric traditions have privileged certain facts and people, excluding whole races, classes, and segments of society from full participation in learning or living” (Gross, 1997, pp. 16-17). Along these lines, Lemke (2001, p. 301) provides a clear—albeit controversial—example of a cultural clash in school science:

To adopt an evolutionist view of human origins is not, for a creationist, just a matter of changing your mind about the facts, or about what constitutes an economical and rational explanation of the facts. It would mean changing a core element of your identity as a Bible-believing (fundamentalist) Christian. It would mean breaking an essential bond with your community (and with your god).
While students in schools may want to avoid assimilation due to such cultural differences, resistance is futile; with standardized curriculum usually comes standardized assessment and accountability. It is a given that it is much easier to control subordinates when their thoughts and actions can be predicted and are under continuous surveillance. Such conformity appears to be good for business. With school graduates increasingly alike, the general population may be more homogeneous and, therefore, more susceptible to mass marketing (Galbraith, 1958).

3. **Passivity via Saturation:** Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the long and prominent history of science, science curricula tend to be dominated by teaching and learning of scientific achievements—e.g. laws, theories and inventions. The “medium [of school science] is reinforcing the message … that science education is about remembering the results of other’s [professional scientists’ and engineers’] research (‘facts’) rather than developing the ability to conduct one’s own” (Claxton, 1991, p. 28). Such excessive focus on receiving and accepting conclusions of science can seriously compromise students’ drive to ask questions, to critique claims, to criticize those who control knowledge and to develop their own conclusions. Indeed, saturating people with consumer goods (or scientific and technological achievements) is considered an excellent pacifying technique (Galbraith, 1958; Dobbin, 1998). It was Henry Ford, for example, who suggested that approach for defeating the Bolsheviks:

The way to a greater wealth is to use our new production techniques to create and distribute commodities to those capable of laboring to earn them. [Remember,] material poverty is the seedbed of seditious ideas. We will sterilize that seedbed with goods carefully designed to addict and render impotent the majority of citizens (cited in Fawcett, 1990, p.72).

4. **Confusion via Intensification:** Science curricula are, typically, so overburdened with expectations for learning scientific achievements that teachers often feel compelled to rapidly deliver concepts to students, giving them few opportunities to apply them in personally meaningful contexts. Indeed, school science has been likened to “an out-of-control roller coaster” (Millar 1996, p. 8). This can be very confusing for many students. A science student in the UK, for example, described such experiences this way: “You just get to know what you’re talking about and [teachers] change [the topic] ... you forget everything that you know ... in the end you do not know what you are doing” (Claxton, 1991, p. 24). Consequently, most school leavers, apparently, forget or retain confused conceptions of common laws, theories and inventions of science (Claxton, 1991; Jenkins, 2000). Millar (1996) claimed, for example, that most studies of students’ (by the age 16) understandings of fundamental laws and principles of science—including the particle theory of matter, the model of the solar system, and ideas about animal and plant gas exchange—are either simplistic or quite different from those of scientists. Similar results are obtained for lay adults. The confusion and rote learning that this sort of education engenders can seriously compromise students’ potential involvement in decision making on issues important to them.

5. **Reverence via Idealization:** Corporations can benefit tremendously if science—which is now largely under corporate control—is believed efficient, unbiased and unproblematic with respect to possible negative effects on individuals, societies and environments. Citizens are
less likely to protest when products and practices of science threaten individuals (e.g. health), societies (e.g. labour practices) and environments (e.g. oil spills).

While it may be unrealistic to expect any formal schooling to mimic the discipline it represents (e.g. professional science), school science often seems like a sophisticated *infomercial*—i.e., selling products and practices of science by casting it in the most positive light. Teachers are, for example, required to help students “develop the skills, strategies, and *habits of mind* required for scientific inquiry” (MoET, 1999b, p. 4; emphasis added). Often, the “habits of mind” for scientific inquiry refer to traits like: communalism, universalism, disinterestedness, originality and skepticism (Ziman, 1984)—which are, apparently, somewhat *mythical*. Various studies of scientific and technological practices (e.g. Knorr-Cetina, 1995; Latour and Woolgar, 1986; Lynch, 1985; Traweek, 1988) reveal that hoarding of information, cultural variations in science practices, personal and group biases, plagiarism, and blind trust in data sometimes are found in authentic scientific practices. Nevertheless, various myths—albeit from a social constructivist perspective—about scientific products and practices frequently pervade school science, including that: i) observation provides direct and reliable access to secure knowledge, ii) science starts with observation, iii) science proceeds via induction, iv) experiments are decisive, v) science comprises discrete, generic processes, vi) scientific inquiry is a simple, algorithmic procedure, vii) science is a value-free activity, viii) science is an exclusively Western, post-Renaissance activity, ix) the so-called “scientific attitudes” are essential to the effective practice of science, and x) scientists possess these attitudes (Hodson, 1999). Where such myths about professional science and technology are perpetuated through school science, it seems teachers are being used as “Sales Associates” for business and industry. Consequently, because of increased advertizing in our society, students may be, contrary to official claims, “prey to dogmatists, flimflam artists, and purveyors of simple solutions to complex problems” (AAAS, 1989, p. 13).

6. **Dependence via Regulation**: Corporations can capitalize on a citizenry lacking resources to develop conceptions of and appropriate changes to natural phenomena. They are more likely to serve as compliant workers and enthusiastic consumers of products and services. All too frequently, teachers help develop such dependence through various ways they regulate students’ decisions—to a great extent—because of their rush to ‘cover’ excessively content-laden mandatory curricula (Claxton, 1991). While it is generally considered important to immerse students in experiences mimicking authentic scientific inquiry, teachers often feel compelled, for example, to guide students through (supposed) confirming (pseudo-)experiments. Seldom do students have opportunities to conduct science projects under their control (Hodson, 1996; Lock, 1990). Even with constructivism-informed pedagogies, through which students may believe they are freely constructing knowledge, coercion may be occurring. Some have likened it to “strategic warfare” (Cobern, 1996), with students’ thoughts and actions ‘attacked’ at every turn to ensure construction in appropriate directions. Angles of attack appear to involve: i) maligning students’ pre-instructional conceptions, ii) engineering students’ empirical inquiries and iii) regulating students’ conclusions (Bencze, 2000a).

Where school science is excessively geared towards managing students’ actions and conclusions in these ways, students may become ‘intellectually dependent’ (Munby, 1980), unable to judge
knowledge claims independent from authorities. This is, clearly, undemocratic. It is a sign students in schools are being oppressed. Indeed, such a situation

in which some men [sic] prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry, is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate men from their own decision-making is to change them into subjects (Freire, 1997, p. 73). ... [A] dominator has no choice but to deny true praxis [reflective action] to the people, deny them the right to say their own words and think their own thoughts (Freire, 1997, p. 107, emphases added).

7. Disempowerment via Isolation: While business and industry may want some workers who can collaboratively solve problems, there also may be corporate benefits to isolationism in society. We live, apparently, in a milieu in which “radical individualism” is normalized and “the social good is revealed in and through the actions of independent, self-motivated individuals—especially as they engage in economic exchanges” (Beyer, 1998, p. 250).

Apparently, through curriculum standardization and surveillance (assessment), along with excessive curriculum content loading, an ethic of competitiveness is fostered, as students struggle to achieve authorities’ recipes (i.e., curriculum expectations) for citizenship in science. Teaching

[such] values of individual free enterprise prepares the students to adopt corporate loyalty. ... In such an environment, a student learns that when the boy seated next to her drops out of school, he is solely responsible for the decision. In the words of the Conference Board of Canada, he has ‘apparently ign[ed] the tremendous cost to himself and society.’ What happens to him is of no concern to her. She is learning to blame the unemployed for their condition ... (Barlow and Robertson, 1994, p. 82).

At the same time, such a focus on individualized, competitive learning and assessment may disempower individuals and promote consumerism. Isolated individuals may be more dependent on producers of goods and services than would be members of collaborative teams.

Generally, therefore, school science that focuses excessively on identification and education of potential scientists and engineers seems to “produce as an inevitable waste-product of its search for ‘successes’ a large pile of relative failures. ... If for every student who learns that they can ‘do science’ there have to be three or four [or many more!] who learn they cannot” (Claxton, 1991, p. 129). Moreover, as argued above, it is apparent many of these “failures” are largely being prepared to function as consumers of labour instructions and of products and services. This would mean a public service (science education) is being used to engineer most citizens’ thoughts and actions in ways benefiting economic élite. Astonishingly, “what looks like the apex of humanism [may], in fact, [be] the pinnacle of human submission: children are educated to become precisely what society expects of them” (Ellul, 1954, p. 348). Indeed, it is estimated about 80% of working populations in the USA are “exploited and excluded” (Percucci and Wysong 1999, p. 100). If so, there may be a “decidedly undemocratic spirit that motivates reforms designed to keep the public ignorant and passive as opposed to enlightened and active” (Wood, 1998, p. 185). Indeed, on a larger scale, this generally stratifying and disempowering
education appears to represent a major mechanism for maintaining the global economic *status quo*—that is, a modern-day feudal system in which a small fraction of the world’s population controls the vast majority of Earth’s wealth (Chomsky, 1993). Gaps between rich and poor are getting so great, indeed, some refer to existence of a “global economic apartheid” (McLaren and Baltodano, 2000, p. 56). Such use of public education is indefensible. “This well-documented *status quo*, where this is precisely the case, is intolerable and must be changed with the utmost urgency” (Claxton, 1991, pp. 130), preferably in ways promoting global equality of opportunity and responsibility (Jones, 1999).

**TOWARDS A JUST SCHOOL SCIENCE**

*Preamble*

As a cultural and political system that stands for equity of both opportunity and responsibility, a democracy should entitle every citizen access to intellectual riches of their society and, inherent to that, abilities enabling them to self-determine—at their discretion—their thoughts and actions and, as well, contribute to reformation of that society. In other words, a democratic education attempts to balance cultural *production* with *re-production*. That, in turn, implies schools should be “contested cultural sites, not simply places where instruction takes place and bits of neutral knowledge are transferred” (Giroux, 1989, p. 176). Although it is essential youth have access to our collective wisdom, in the world they may inherit, “nothing could be of greater value than the ability to make your own life up as you go along: to find for yourself what is satisfying; to know your own values and your own mind; to meet uncertainty with courage and resourcefulness; and to appraise what others tell you with an intelligent and healthy skepticism” (Claxton, 1991, p. 130). In other words, curriculum principles and practices are needed in democracies that include not only what adults think is important, but also the questions and concerns that young people have about themselves and their world. [It] invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of ‘meaning makers.’ It recognizes that people acquire knowledge by both studying external sources and engaging in complex activities that require them to *construct their own knowledge* (Beane and Apple, 1995, p. 15-16; emphases added).

What follows are some general recommendations for moving towards more just uses of school science. Clearly, there can be no recipe for justice or for education. Every situation is unique and actors need to consider myriad situational variables in determining what sort of education would meet needs, interests, abilities and perspectives of individual students in particular contexts. The recommendations below need to be considered in that light.

**Subverting Corporate-friendly Social Engineering**

While curriculum renewal towards a more just science education may require significant—if not *revolutionary*—political action, activists and educators might consider the following principles and pedagogic possibilities that are intended to counter the sorts of factors outlined above that seem to be engineering a corporate-friendly society:
1. **Inclusion via Contextualization**: Assuming culturally rich have a selective advantage in school science—through their ability to deal with decontextualized concepts, symbols and processes, etcetera—we need ways to **contextualize** students’ learning in school science. Many educators, including several with **science** backgrounds (Cajas, 1999; DeBoer, 2000; Fensham and Harlen, 1999; Jenkins, 2000; Layton, 1993; Millar, 1996; Longbottom and Butler, 1999), have, accordingly, called for infusion of more **technology** education into school science. Indeed, merging these fields may be justified, in part, because of their similarities (Roth, 2001). From one perspective, **science** seems to have characteristics of a **technology**, especially if one accepts a constructivist epistemology of science—which would imply that the sciences construct or ‘engineer’ ideas serving various functions. On the other hand, because **technology** may document, explain, and predict artefacts that may exist (i.e., be invented) in nature (assuming humans are part of nature and that our artefacts are, therefore, natural), technology seems to have characteristics of a **science**. Given this paradox, technology and science may, broadly, represent one complex field—perhaps named **technoscience** (Bencze, 2001b)—that could be offered in schools.

Mandates for **technoscience** programmes do, indeed, now exist. Ontario, for example, has legislated that science and technology shall be taught together in all elementary schools (MoET, 1998). While curriculum frameworks enabling integration of science and technology are still needed, some success has been reported with constructivism-informed approaches (e.g., Bencze, 2001b). Given their emphasis on natural diversity of learners’ perspectives, interests, abilities, etc., these approaches can be highly **inclusive**. Moreover, they view learning as highly **situational** (Lave and Wenger, 1991), involving often simultaneous consideration of myriad contextual variables, including characteristics unique to particular learners. It is **learners** who set problems and goals, develop methods for their solution and achievement and, ultimately, make sense from available data and propositional knowledge. Such approaches have much in common with problem-based learning (PBL) strategies, which frequently involve groups of learners and facilitators in elaborating ideas about a problem, learning information necessary to solve it and, then, testing their ideas in practical situations (Hmelo and Evensen, 2000). Along these lines, issues-based STSE education is powerful, challenging learners to solve social and environmental problems related to science (Solomon and Aikenhead, 1994). Engaging students in such meaningful problem solving can, in principle, help them to become citizen activists about issues of importance to them (McGinn and Roth, 1999). In these and other approaches, where control of learning has been ceded—to a great extent—to students (e.g., Bencze, 1996, 2000b), education is less about serving interests of controllers of education and more about serving those being educated.

2. **Diversity via Pluralization**: While students from all backgrounds and with various interests, perspectives and abilities deserve access to powerful knowledge of the dominant culture of society, they need not be **assimilated** into it. Although sub-cultures often resist elimination (Marginson, 1999), numerous authors recommend proactive strategies to protect and promote diversity (Aikenhead, 1997; Hodson and Dennick, 1994; Hynes, 1994; Rodriguez, 2001). Pedagogical programmes aimed at enabling aboriginal students to “border cross” into sub-cultures of science without risk to their cultural identities, for example, are now well developed (e.g., Aikenhead and Jegede, 1999, p. 284):
In the 21st century, the borders around school science need to be reshaped and reconstituted to encourage students classified as Other Smart Kids, ‘I Don’t Know’ Students, or even Outsiders, to participate in collateral learning by helping them negotiate the cultural transitions into newly designed science programs, characterized by their inclusive curricula and culturally sensitive instruction.

Generally, their aim is to help students develop “egalitarian literacy” (Bencze, 2000a), literacy that acknowledges and respects ways of knowing and doing of different cultures, races, ethnic groups and both genders. Students are given access to a spectrum of perspectives and practices and encouraged to determine—through methods under their control—to which they feel they need to adhere.

At the same time, individuals and groups must be given power and opportunities to evolve, to be able to adapt under new conditions because of their diversity. Pedagogical approaches that prioritize student-controlled science projects (Bencze, 1996, 2000a,b, 2001b; Gott and Duggan, 1995; Hodson, 1993; Roth, 1995), because they encourage students to direct procedures and conclusions (Lock, 1990), by their very nature, generate diversity and should be promoted.

3. Productivity via Rationalization: Although all students deserve access to intellectual riches of their forebears, doing so should not dominate to the point of habituating passive consumerism. Students need opportunities to become active producers of knowledge in order for them to be able to re-shape their personal and social worlds. In the context of school science, that would imply a better balance amongst Hodson’s (1993) three outcomes for science (and technology) education; i.e., learning science, learning about science and (to overcome saturation) to do science. This, in turn, implies governments must find ways to rationalize (group and reduce) curriculum ‘content’ to essential outcomes for science, a goal also promoted elsewhere (Cajas, 1999; DeBoer, 2000; Fensham, 2000; Hodson, 1998; Jenkins, 2000; Longbottom and Butler, 1999). In other words, teachers and students need to “do more with less” (e.g., AAAS, 1989)—that is, through reduction in what they are expected to learn, students would be freed to apply fewer concepts and skills to problem solving situations having relevance to them. This is an outcome closed-related to “independence via facilitation,” elaborated below.

4. Comprehension via Application: No longer should school science be like trying to take a sip from a fire hose! With rationalization of curricula, as recommended above, students would be able to use fewer ideas, skills, strategies, etc. in meaningful applications, such as in student-directed (SD), open-ended (OE) (Lock, 1990) science projects. “Understanding, by its very nature, is related to action; just as information, by its very nature, is isolated from action” (Dewey, 1946, p. 49). On the other hand, what conceptions students develop will depend on particular topics with which they choose to engage. As well, there are no guarantees their projects will lead (when teacher guidance is not forthcoming) to widely-held laws, theories and inventions of Western science. Nevertheless, it may be better to learn a few things well than many things superficially—as often is the case in school science characterized by rapid-fire, decontextualized transmission of achievements of science.
5. **Enlightenment via Authenticity**: If students are to be properly and ethically educated, school science must prioritize helping them develop more realistic epistemological and ontological conceptions of these fields (Cunningham and Helms, 1998; DfEE, 1999; NRC, 1996).

If we teach more rigorously about acids and bases, but do not tell students anything about the historical origins of these concepts or the economic impact of technologies based on them, is the scientific literacy we are producing really going to be useful to our students as citizens? The most sophisticated view of knowledge available to us today says that it is a falsification of the nature of science to teach concepts outside of their social, economic, historical, and technological contexts. Concepts taught in this way are relatively useless in life, however well they may seem to be understood on a test (Lemke, 2001, p.300).

Promoting more realistic ('authentic') conceptions of the nature of science is, however, a complex matter. Like learning conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge (e.g., epistemological) cannot easily be *discovered* through implicit (inductive) strategies, such as ‘authentic’ project work (Roth, 1995) and, therefore needs to be communicated explicitly (Abd-El-Khalick and Lederman, 2000)—through consideration of various propositions about science in the “card exchange game” (Cobern and Loving, 1998), for example. However, explicit strategies risk biasing students towards perspectives about science peculiar to planners of educational experiences who provide propositions, which can be misleading—given the heterogeneity of views about science (Rudolph, 2000). Consequently, approaches not wholly dependent on induction but, at the same time, exposing learners to representative spectra of propositions about science, may be best. Having identified their positions, learners may judge/evaluate (deductively) them through science-related experiences they might encounter—e.g., through visits with or from practising scientists, or when conducting science projects under their control (Lock, 1990; Roth, 1995).

Students with more well developed conceptions about science may be better equipped to function in participatory democracies (Wood, 1998) and, moreover, be prepared to become citizen activists (McGinn and Roth, 1999)—able to participate in scientific matters important to them.

6. **Independence via Facilitation**: School science could be more about independence of thought and action if students were encouraged to develop skills and strategies enabling them to independently create knowledge using appropriate selections of methods of science and technology in particular contexts. This is a powerful recommendation. It is a call for student self-determination, enabling students to set their own course in life, rather than be limited to those pre-determined for them by those engineering their education.

One route to such empowerment is to encourage students to conduct science projects largely under their control, often dealing with topics of concern to them (Bencze, 2000b; Gott and Duggan, 1995; Lock, 1990; Roth, 1995). While jurisdictions have given formal curricular approval to project work in schools (e.g., DfEE, 1999; NRC, 1996), they are, generally, very poorly implemented (Jenkins, 1995). Among barriers to their success is the aforementioned excessive focus on achievements of science, leaving little room for independent knowledge building. At the same time, teachers’ minimal experience with self-directed empirical (theory-
based) investigations and with relevant pedagogical approaches also are problematic (e.g., Olson 
and Loucks-Horsley, 2000). Consequently, teacher education approaches that mentor student 
teachers in science project work and corresponding pedagogical perspectives and practices, some 
of which have enjoyed successes (e.g., Bencze and Bowen, 2003), need development.

7. **Empowerment via Collaboration**: Education, both while we are in school and beyond, needs 
to be a Gestalt experience—where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Rather than 
being subjected to the ‘new right’ position, in which “the social good is [supposedly] 
revealed in and through the actions of independent, self-motivated individuals” (Beyer, 1998, 
p. 250), students (and citizens, in general) need to gain strength through membership in 
*social learning systems* and, more specifically, *communities of practice* (Wenger, 2000). A 
‘community of practice’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is a group of people which, through 
engagement in common activities over extended periods of time, develop and share, for 
example, discourse practices, tools, rules, beliefs, identities, tacit knowledge, domains of 
interest, etc. (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As a consequence, they are ‘rich’ through 
collaboration. “The currency of these systems is collegiality, reciprocity, expertise, 
contributions to practice, and negotiating a learning agenda; not affiliation to an institution, 
assigned authority or commitment to predefined deliverables” (Wenger, 2000, pp. 243-244). 
Indeed, rather than being subject to systematic controls, with standards and assessment 
applying universally, *situational* learning can be prioritized. This can be empowering 
because “the primary source of value creation [in authentic communities of practice] lies in 
*informal* processes, such as conversations, brainstorming, and pursuing ideas” (Wenger, 
2000, p. 244; emphasis added).

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Public science education apparently is not being used, paradoxically, for enlightenment and 
education of most children. Instead, it seems to function as a mechanism serving—with 
government assistance—globally-connected elite in ensuring the majority of humanity assume 
appropriate roles in production-consumption cycles (Barnet and Cavanagh, 1994; Henry *et al.* 
1999; Martin and Schumann, 1997). In an intense search for students who, largely because of 
their cultural wealth, may become engineers and scientists to develop and manage mechanisms 
of production of goods and services (enabling businesses to compete successfully in increasingly 
globalized markets), more culturally-impoverished students are sorted along a continuum— 
perhaps with a negative distribution—of economic roles. Moreover, it is apparent large segments 
of society are ‘engineered’ to unquestioningly consume labour instructions and, as well, products 
and services of business and industry.

If school science is, indeed, serving the world’s economic elite to a greater extent than those 
being educated, ways must be developed to provide all learners with access to societal 
intellectual riches, including abilities to self-determine their thoughts and actions and, as well, 
contribute to the well-being of societies and the planet. While stratified societies governed by a 
small cohort of elite has been entrenched from at least Plato’s time (c375 BC), and while 
economic control of education—e.g., through standardization and assessment—has recently been 
highly effective (DeBoer, 2000), we must never cease efforts to provide an excellent and 
equitable society for youth. Perhaps called *democratic excellence* (Lee, 1999), a just balance 
must be found between service to students and those influencing their education.
In this article, a series of ‘lenses’ through which educators and policy makers might critically examine schooling have been provided and, in that light, it has been recommended that, in turn, school science become more contextualized, pluralistic, rationalized, applied, authentic, facilitative and collaborative. When these and other recommendations are realized, perhaps science education will be more about enlightenment and empowerment for all students, rather than about wealth concentration for the few controlling public education.

REFERENCES


**CONTACT INFORMATION**
Larry Bencze
Associate Professor, Science Education
Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
OISE/UT, University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West
TORONTO, ON MSS 1V6 CANADA

Phone: 416 923 6641, ext. 2429
Fax: 416 926 4744
E-mail: lbencze@oise.utoronto.ca
Web Site: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/~lbencze
Workplace Democracy for Occupational Safety and Health
A Summary Report of a Pilot Project

William J. Benet
Rochester Institute of Technology, Social Work Department
Community/University Partnership Project

Introduction

This pilot project initiated an assessment of the effectiveness of using adult education and social work concepts (particularly participatory research and popular education) to generate a transformative learning environment in which worker mobilization and empowerment is used to promote workplace democracy as a means to change the adverse work organization and societal policies that contribute to occupational safety and health problems in general and occupational stress in particular.

This pilot project was designed as a test of a proposed international, industry-wide, comparative research occupational safety and health demonstration project to be carried out by a consortium of organizations including the Rochester Institute for Technology (RIT), the Rochester Council on Occupational Safety and Health (RoCOSH), the University of Toronto, and the Hamilton Labour Council.

Consistent with the participatory research methodology, the concept for the proposed international project and this pilot project grew out of the efforts of grass-roots, union based workers (who were affiliated with RoCOSH during the period of 1996 through 1999) who were engaged in addressing occupational safety and health issues.

The two year pilot project was carried out in Rochester, New York from January, 2000 through December, 2001 as a collaborative project of the RIT Social Work Department, RoCOSH, the Rochester Labor Council and the Rochester Building Trades Council. Funding was obtained that allowed us to fully incorporate the groundwork, organizing, and orientation stages of the participatory research model within the pilot project. During the period of the pilot project no funds were secured that would have allowed us to implement actual participatory research projects on specific occupational safety and health problems, a key element of the proposed international project. Nevertheless, actions consistent with the participatory research methodology were generated even without funding.

Results of the pilot project are encouraging and suggest that the industry-wide application of adult education and social work concepts (particularly participatory research) holds promise for engaging workers in transformative learning experiences that generate worker empowerment, advance participatory democracy concepts within the workplace, and engage workers in broader considerations of the linkages between citizenship learning, participatory democracy, and social change. A full report on the Pilot Project is available upon request.

Methodological Construct of the Pilot Project
The pilot project was facilitated by the author (who was then Executive Director of RoCOSH) who served as overall pilot project director (and Co-Principal Investigator). Dr. Marshall Smith (RIT Department of Social Work) served as the other Co-Principal Investigator.

A Project Team was created to control the overall pilot project. The Project Team consisted of the Co-Principal Investigators, three additional RoCOSH staff members, and a total of 50 volunteer participants. Project Team volunteer members were solicited from: the RoCOSH Board of Directors (predominantly union members); liaisons from individual unions (selected by their union president or business manager based on their involvement in addressing occupational safety and health issues in their workplace); and a group of union women activists who organized the Working Women’s Initiative as part of the pilot project. Consistent with the participatory research methodology, control over the pilot project rested with the collective will of the Project Team.

The pilot project was designed to serve a community-wide, cross-industry population of workers and consisted of four key components: a) a research of the literature in the areas of occupational safety and health in general, occupational stress in particular, and workplace democracy; b) Project Team activities focusing on the exploration of using social work and adult education concepts (particularly the use of participatory research) to identify and control workplace hazards; c) a Training-of-Trainers effort to introduce the elements of comprehensive occupational safety and health programs to workers on an industry-wide basis; and d) the provision of hazard-specific occupational safety and health training and technical assistance to an industry-wide population of workers (and some employers). These four components are summarized below.

Research of the Literature

An extensive review of the literature was conducted on occupational safety and health in general, and the occupational stress literature in particular, focusing on the application of adult education and social work concepts (particularly participatory research and popular education) in order to generate a transformative learning environment in which worker mobilization and empowerment is used to promote workplace democracy.

The review of the literature identified fifteen concepts and/or gaps that might be addressed through the proposed international project. These concepts were shared with the Project Team members and explored throughout the period of the pilot project. The review of the literature is available upon request.

Project Team Activities

Project Team participants were provided with ongoing training and orientation (particularly around, but not limited to, participatory research approaches to occupational safety and health). During the pilot project the Project Team held 8 quarterly 2-hour team meetings. In addition, there were a series of four 2-hour meetings of a Working Women’s Initiative that was comprised of representatives from the American Postal Workers Union, the Federation of Social Workers, the Rochester Teachers Association, and the Service Employees International Union, all of whom were members of the Project Team.

The 50 Project Team participants were introduced to participatory research concepts for hazard identification and control (which can be as basic as body mapping, site mapping, and/or
incident reporting) and a Six-Phase Participatory Research Framework that envisions using teams of volunteer workers/researchers to carry out hazard identification and control projects through the proposed international project.

In general, Project Team members received the specific educational materials one week prior to the meetings. At the quarterly Project Team meetings and the Working Women’s Initiative meetings, the Project Team members reviewed the specific educational materials and participated in a dialogue process to analyze those materials for their impact on occupational safety and health.

In addition to the discussion of the specific educational materials, each of the quarterly Project Team meetings also provided an opportunity for participants to engage in industry-wide dialogue in order to share their stories and experiences about the specific occupational safety and health hazards they face and to explore potential ways in which to address those hazards. This narrative data has informed the shaping of our proposed international project, supports and is consistent with the results contained in this report on the pilot project, and generated specific action efforts that will be described in the findings section below.

Training-of-Trainers Program

A Training-of-Trainers (TOT) program was initiated to provide introductory level training for workers on an industry-wide basis in the areas of a) comprehensive occupational safety and health programs, and b) ergonomics. The TOT program used the Project Team members to train their co-workers. Twenty-six members of the Project Team participated in the TOT program. All twenty-six were trained in the TOT for Introduction to Comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health Programs. Of these, twenty-two also were trained in the TOT for Introductory Ergonomics.

The TOT model consisted of a 2-hour training session on the elements of comprehensive occupational safety and health programs and/or a 2-hour training session on the elements of ergonomics programs, followed by ongoing coaching by RoCOSH staff. The TOT participants then provided introductory level training to their co-workers.

The TOT model for introducing comprehensive occupational safety and health programs was developed by RoCOSH based on OSHA’s model for comprehensive safety & health programs: a) effective labor/management programs (including employee involvement and management commitment); b) job hazard analysis (particularly through participatory research); c) hazard prevention & control; and d) occupational safety & health training.

The TOT model for introducing ergonomics programs was developed by RoCOSH based on a program funded by OSHA: a) an overview and definition of ergonomics; b) the job hazard analysis process; and c) hazard prevention and control methods.

Graduates of the TOT program provided 68 hours of training in Comprehensive Programs for 218 of their fellow union workers and 35 hours of Introductory Ergonomics training for 131 of their fellow union workers (many of these trainees were trained in both).

Hazard-Specific Training

Hazard-specific occupational safety and health training and technical assistance activities were provided to workers on an industry-wide basis and delivered by RoCOSH staff and adjuncts funded through various training grants (DOL, OSHA, etc.). These hazard-specific
training programs were selected by individual union locals (and some employers) to address the particular hazards they were confronting in their workplaces. There were a total of 5,153 participants in 608 training sessions totaling 1,236 hours of hazard-specific training and technical assistance.

Results from the Pilot Project

The standard for measuring the effectiveness of participatory research is evaluating the action that is generated by this approach. The most significant finding of the pilot project is that, while no funds were available to actually engage in participatory research, the pilot project nevertheless resulted in the generation of actions that we believe indicate that transformative learning occurred. The data further suggests that our hypothesis holds great promise: that adult education and social work concepts (particularly participatory research and popular education) may be used to generate a transformative learning environment in which worker mobilization and empowerment is used to promote workplace democracy as a means to change the adverse work organization and societal policies that contribute to occupational safety and health problems in general and occupational stress in particular. Since this project was a pilot for the proposed international project and its more in-depth research, the data also suggests that pursuit of the proposed international project is warranted. The evidence stems from both qualitative and quantitative data as reported below.

Qualitative Data

As noted above, at each Quarterly Project Team meeting, in addition to specific educational materials, participants were provided the opportunity to engage in a dialogue regarding the specific hazards encountered in their workplace and potential solutions for addressing those problems. A total of eight such meetings were conducted. In addition, there were four meetings of the Working Women’s Initiative. Growing out of the dialogue engaged in at these meetings, eight action projects were generated. Six of the projects were pursued by groups of the volunteer participants (three of which are seeking funding to begin their efforts, and three of which began their work without funding). Two of the projects were pursued by staff.

The three Project Team groups that are seeking funding have identified specific occupational safety and health issues that they wish to address through a participatory research project carried out by a team of workers/researchers using the six-phase participatory research framework of the proposed international project.

These three groups are: a) the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 1199 Upstate, which wants to explore needle-stick injuries among its members (predominantly women and people of color) who are housekeeping and maintenance employees at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York; b) the Monroe County Federation of Social Workers (CWA, Local 384), which wants to explore the violence experienced by their members (particularly child protective caseworkers who are predominantly women) when they are in the field; and c) the union women activists who made up the Working Women’s Initiative, who want to examine the disparate impact of occupational stress on women.

The other three efforts initiated by the volunteer participants (which began without funding) also grew directly out of the dialogue sessions at the Quarterly Project Team meetings.
The three efforts include: a) a violence prevention program that grew out of a Public Employees Federation Local with 5 women out of work because they were assaulted by patients in a developmental institution (this project was joined by several members of the Federation of Social Workers and New York State United Teachers locals); b) a silica exposure prevention project that attempted to address the use of equipment that generates silica dust at harmful levels, particularly when used in school construction projects where children are nearby and exposed (the effects of silica exposure are very similar to asbestosis which comes from exposure to asbestos); and c) a working group on the use of continuous bargaining strategies to address the occupational hazards generated by workplace reorganization efforts.

As noted above, the dialogue sessions carried out at the Quarterly Project Team meetings also generated two other initiatives that were pursued by project staff.

First, participants indicated the need for increased institutional support to carry out their projects and to pursue funding for the proposed international project. As a result, funding was sought and obtained to initiate a Community/University Partnership Project (CUPP) within the RIT Social Work Department. That project has been initiated and the first effort of the CUPP is to pursue funding for the proposed international project.

Second, participants identified the difficulty of convincing management of the utility of workplace democracy and expressed a need for developing materials and methods that might motivate employers to embrace workplace democracy. The author is now pursuing this initiative through theoretical research on models of workplace democracy, and adult education methodologies for generating employer support for workplace democracy concepts, which he is conducting through his pursuit of the Ph.D. in Adult Education, with a specialization in Workplace Learning and Change, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data reported on here was derived from an evaluation survey that was administered to the Project Team members. The survey consisted of a series of 45 questions. Ten questions solicited demographic and/or descriptive data. Thirty-five questions used a Likert Scale. Responses were received from 22 of the Project Team members.

In addition, Likert Scale evaluations were given to the 5,152 participants in the hazard-specific training programs. However, while the results of those evaluations were very positive, those results are reported elsewhere and are not included here because this traditional form of training is already well established and is not a central concern of the questions about generating movement towards workplace democracy which form the basis of this pilot project and the proposed international project. Thus, all of the data reported below were taken from the Project Team responses to their questionnaire.

1. Demographic Data.

Demographic data was collected from Project Team members in the following areas: participation in the TOT program; sex; race; age; length of employment; years in current assignment; work shift; size of workplace; and participation in Quarterly meetings.
Of the 22 respondents, 13 had participated in the TOT program. All 13 participated in both the TOT in Comprehensive Programs and the TOT in Introductory Ergonomics.

There were 15 men and 7 women respondents. The respondents included 20 Caucasians, 1 Hispanic and 1 African-American. The mean age of the respondents was 45.2 years. The mean length of employment was 16.06 years. The mean years of employment in their current assignment was 7.68 years. Of the 22 respondents 16 reported working the day shift and only 2 reported working anything but the day shift.

The 22 respondents were from a diverse set of workplaces. Eight were in work locations of less than 10 workers. Seven were from work locations of more than 15 but less than 50 workers. Four were from work locations of 120-175 workers. Finally, three were from work locations with large numbers of workers (500, 700, and 2,200).

Eighteen of the respondents (81.82%) had been participants in at least one of the Project Team meetings. Sixteen of the respondents (59.09%) had been participants in at least two of the meetings.

2. Likert Scale Data.

Of the thirty-five Likert Scale questions, fifteen solicited participants perceptions about the program, and twenty solicited information on the participants knowledge of and participation in any of ten worker mobilization efforts supported by the Rochester Labor Council and thought to be the kind of activity necessary to bring about changes in workplace and societal policies that will lead to safer workplaces.

The ten worker mobilization efforts included: union density efforts; a Living Wage campaign; an Anti-Sweatshop campaign; AFL-CIO Organizing efforts; AFL-CIO Union City efforts; COPE efforts; a Labor Lyceum educational series; a Labor film series; the Labor Day Parade; and Workers Memorial Day activities.

For each of the worker mobilization efforts, respondents were first asked how much their awareness of the concerns increased and they were then asked how much their participation increased since the beginning of their involvement in the pilot project.

The Likert Scale used for the survey was from 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all” (or “none at all” for 1 question) and 5 being “a great deal”.

The statistical procedure used was to identify the median response for each of the thirty-five Likert Scale questions and to calculate the percentage of respondents choosing each of the 5 responses. The thirty-five questions were than clustered into four groups: a) very strongly supported (at least 66% of respondents chose a 4 or 5, at least 90% of the respondents chose 3, 4, or 5, less than 10% chose 1 or 2, and the median was at least 4); b) strongly supported (at least 50% of respondents chose a 4 or 5, at least 80% of the respondents chose 3, 4, or 5, and the median was at least 3.5); c) moderately supported (at least 31% of respondents chose a 4 or 5, the percentage choosing 4 or 5 was at least greater than the percentage choosing 1 or 2, and the median was at least 3; and d) weakly or not supported (all others).

Of the 35 Likert Scale questions, four of the questions fell into the very strongly supported category; six of the questions fell into the strongly supported category; six of the questions fell into the moderately supported category; and nineteen of the questions fell into the weakly or not supported category. The total responses to the survey by the Project Team members are available upon request.
Discussion

Interpretation of Data

Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest some successes of the pilot project and point the way for future activities and additional research that might be pursued.

Surprisingly, and most importantly, while funding to actually carry out participatory research on occupational hazard identification and control was not secured, the project nevertheless has generated action, which is the test of the participatory research method. The initiatives on workplace violence, silica exposure prevention, using continuous bargaining to address hazards caused by workplace reorganization, needle-stick prevention, and the disproportionate impact of occupational stress on working women all attest to the growing sense of empowerment among the Project Team participants.

This was confirmed by the content of the discussion that took place at the Quarterly Project Team meetings. It was further confirmed by the responses to the survey:

First, the two highest response rates on the Likert Scale questions were given to questions about increased awareness of occupational safety and health in general and the increased awareness of the hazard identification and control process. This suggests very strong support for the idea that the pilot project has been successful in increasing awareness even among a group that, when they first came into the program, already had a commitment to address occupational safety and health issues in their workplace.

Second, the responses suggest very strong support for the idea that cross-industry discussion has been effective in helping participants to understand the occupational safety and health problems in their own industry. Given the seriousness of the problems reported through the survey’s descriptive data and the narratives generated at the quarterly Project Team meetings, this result alone may justify the use of the methodology.

Third, the responses suggest strong support among participants for the belief that creating teams to engage in participatory research on the most critical occupational safety and health hazards in their workplaces would reduce those hazards.

Fourth, the responses suggest strong support for the idea that participation in the pilot project has better prepared participants and their co-workers to identify hazards in their workplaces.

Fifth, the responses suggest strong support for the idea that participation in the pilot project has made participants and their co-workers more willing to raise health and safety concerns with management.

Sixth, the responses suggest strong support for the idea that participation in the pilot project has made it easier for the local union or its members to be more active on health and safety issues.

Seventh, despite not being able to engage in participatory research on occupational safety and health hazards, participants’ responses suggest a strong feeling of empowerment since they began participation in the program.

Finally, the responses suggest moderate support for: the increased awareness of participants in the areas of union density issues, living wage campaign, AFL-CIO organizing efforts, and Workers Memorial Day; the use by participants of the materials provided through the pilot project; and that, since participation in the pilot project, participants actually have raised health and safety concerns with their employers.
Limitations

Given the small size of the Project Team respondents, the absence of any comparison group, and the generally less reliable results provided by respondents’ perceptions as recorded through surveys rather than behaviors recorded by observable behavior or through in-depth interviews, no attempt has been made to provide an analysis that would identify statistically significant or generalizable results.

Further, given the underlying theory of participatory research (e.g., that dialogue and reflection should lead to action to address the underlying oppressive conditions that are contributing to the problem) it is problematic that all of the questions about participation in the related societal change activities were weakly supported, soliciting more responses of 1 or 2 than responses of 4 or 5.

However, this may not be too surprising given that our funding only allowed us to introduce the participatory research process and engage in dialogue about occupational safety and health issues. It is anticipated that obtaining funding that will actually allow us to engage in participatory research on specific occupational safety and health problems will lead to increased participation in these societal change efforts.

Conclusion

Occupational injury and illness in general, and occupational stress in particular, take a horrific toll on working men and women. Our Project Team members confirm, through both dialogue and survey responses, the impact of these occupational problems on their lives.

The results of this pilot project are encouraging, and suggest that further research is warranted on the extent to which adult education and social work concepts may be useful in generating an industry-wide transformative learning experience that can mobilize and empower workers to promote workplace democracy as a means to a) identify and control hazards in their workplace, and b) change the adverse work organization and societal policies that contribute to occupational safety and health problems in general and occupational stress in particular.

Author Contact: BillBenet@mail.rit.edu
Indigenous Spirituality as a Forum for Personal and Social Awakening: Remembering and healing ancestral relationships in participation with Mother Earth, humankind, all animate and inanimate beings, all seen and unseen spirits is the foundation for democracy.

Illana Berger, Fania Davis, and William Woodworth

The spiritual world is just like the natural world—only diversity will save it. Just as the health of a forest or fragrant meadow can be measured by the number of different insects and plants and creatures that successfully make it their home, so only by an extraordinary abundance of disparate spiritual and philosophic paths will human beings navigate a pathway through the dark and swirling storms that mark our current era. ‘Not by one avenue alone, wrote Symmachus sixteen centuries ago, ‘can we arrive at so tremendous a secret.’

We live in a time when it seems that we have lost touch with what is sacred. We have lost or perhaps just forgotten that we are not body or mind, but that we are spiritual beings living inside of a body accompanied by a mind. Our bodies live within a “body politic” that has become our moral, emotional, and cultural touch-stone for living our lives. The goal of any lifetime, the world’s spiritual traditions teach, is a journey of self-discovery. We ultimately arrive at the shores of our own destiny to find our “Self” standing there. Self-inquiry into the source of the “I,” not the roles we play or the body we abide in, is, I believe, the purpose of the human journey.

The title of this paper: Indigenous Spirituality as a Forum for Personal and Social Awakening is provocative, to say the least. Though we are exploring issues of transformation I have chosen to speak of awakening instead; because it addresses the underlining opportunity that, I believe, indigenous practices provide for the individual as well as society.

I believe that transformation is not actually a change at all, but a realization, an awakening to our true Self, and then living from that place. The living from a new place with awakened eyes and action is, I believe, more about evolution than change. Thus the title Awakening rather than transforming.

The awakening that I am speaking about in this paper is the awakening that a caterpillar has to his true nature as a butterfly, or the acorn’s true nature as an oak tree. Mahatma Gandhi taught: “be the change you want to see.” Ram Das taught, “be before see,” meaning that an individual must become that which they want to see in the outside world. In order to begin to see it “out there” it must be present “in here.” This becoming is not an invention of something new, it is a recovery, and a remembering of what is essential. It is a recovery or a remembering of our essential nature. In our society, at this time, we are so very attached to the story we tell ourselves of who we think we are. If we turn the mind back on itself, however, we are able to truly know whom we are. Beyond the story, beyond the influences of culture, family, and tribe we abide in the coalescence of relationships, DNA, genetics, biology, and destiny. To be released from our story and into the seat of what is true and real, requires a spiritual practice, which develops our ability to discern and ask the deep questions of inquiry. The inquiry begins with the story that our lives have told, the signs along the way that have propelled us down one path or another.
However, once the story is revealed to us, once we are able to place ourselves on the map of destiny, purpose, and fate we no longer have the need to hold onto the confines of the story itself. Rather we abide in the teaching, in the wisdom and in the journey itself. How then might indigenous spirituality or tribal knowing be a platform or foundation for such a dramatic awakening? To begin to answer this question we must look at what indigenous ways of knowing are, what the spiritual practices instruct, and how one might enter into a relationship with these old ways and embody them in such a way that they awaken who we are, thus evolve our being into our essential nature, our Divine Self.

Indigenous Epistemology/Spirituality

“When we ask ourselves why we have come, and we listen—with a more profound quality of listening—not just with mind, but with our heart, we can discern that we are here today as a part of a deeper current moving through our world. We can hear a calling, realize an intention, or perhaps, sense an imperative”. Rev Ellen Grace O’Brian

There are essentially five elements that constitute an indigenous spirituality and define indigenous ways of knowing. The first is tradition. By tradition, I mean a way of relating and living on the Earth that is expressed within the rituals, and daily living practices of a people—a culture from a specific place over a long period of time. The first place to look for tradition is within the framework of one’s own culture[s] of origin. Living in our bodies are the wisdom teachings of all the ancestors who have participated in our birth into this lifetime.

All people were at one time “First Nation People.” “First Nation People” is a term used to refer to ancient cultures that originated within a specific location on the earth. Typically this term refers to Native Americans, Africans, and other Indigenous people. However, we all are related to the earth and all her inhabitants. If we follow our lineages back through time we will arrive at a time where our people were indigenous to a specific place. Within the context of these cultures, one will find traditional expressions of life. It is in this place of tradition that we begin to define a way of knowing that is fundamentally different from our western contemporary understanding and experience of life. These traditional ways of living and knowing are seeds inside the DNA of our bodies and carry the instructions for the practices of our “people.” These practices are rituals and ceremonies that awaken the earth, all beings, and ourselves to a wisdom, a knowing, and an experience of oneness, wholeness, freedom, open heartedness and love that permeates in all directions, to all corners of the earth and into the past, present and future simultaneously. In these rituals and ceremonies are the ingredients, the instructions for attaining that oneness; that unity. This union enables humans to build alliances with all of Creation. We are awakened to our kinship with all beings; one sustaining the other, one supporting the other, one loving the other.

The second element of indigenous epistemology is in the spoken word, the language of one’s culture of origin. In tribal ways of being/knowing language is prayer and song that influences Creation at multiple layers of its manifestation. Language is breath Spirit, used in a spiritual, impressionistic, or emotional context; and language is sacred. Western languages revolve
predominantly around the use of nouns; however, most indigenous languages were structurally verb based. These ancient tribal languages articulate participation with and relating to, all that is. Becoming conscious of our use of language and studying our culture of origin’s language structure begins to change us at a fundamental level. Our assumptions regarding our speech and our relationship to others via our words and communications affect our actions and our experiences of our Self through the meanings, vibrations and tones of the language itself. English, for instance, was first invented in order to engage in commerce. The structure of the language created a forum for the exchange of goods between people from all over the world. It also provided a structure for disengaging from the personal relationship to these “things” as well as the people associated with their creation. To this day, English is fundamental to modern commerce. However, ancient languages were fundamental to communicating with the Divine, to nature, the cosmos and to Spirits. The language articulated the sacred and distinguished the human relationship to life. These languages defined a “thing” by describing who or what it was. The word for a woman, for example, in some Salish languages is “tklthmilxw” (t kelth meel wh). It describes a woman's ability to separate into two human beings; the sacred role as life giver. Tkkelth refers to divide/separate and mee wh describes the human animal body/flesh. Also, between the Ivrim, or the ancient Jews there are over 100 different names for the Divine. In the translation of Aramaic Hebrew into English, Greek and Roman, however, all were translated as “God.” This use of language instituted a concept of the divine as a male, dominant, patriarchal and all-powerful father. This translation supported and dignified the world-view and life way of the people who the translation was meant to serve, even though it no longer reflected the world-view or life relationship of the people who wrote it.

The third element is the creative act of making something with spiritual intent that reflects an expression of Spirit. To build a home, or a basket, or an altar acknowledges at all stages of the creative process, the presence of the Divine – of Spirit. Spirit being the impulse that animates all of life. Whether one is preparing a meal, a letter, a song, a basket, or a painting, the intention -- the motivation is for the expression of the Divine. This expression of divinity is not separate from the self; it is the Self. Indigenous spirituality suggests that the “thing” that an individual is engaged with, in the creative process, is an articulation of the soul, that animating force within all living things. This divinity within the object is ultimately a reflection of the true Self.

The fourth element of indigenous knowing is the realm of ceremony and ritual that marks the cycles of time and follows the visible and invisible patterns of nature and the cosmos. The acknowledgment of these cycles through ritual structure expresses the sacred in the community and the cultural context of traditional indigenous life. Each and everything one engages with or does is conscious. Recognizing the stages of the moon, the height of the sun, the direction of the winds, the presence of a hawk, or the state of the trees creates ceremony in every moment. Marking the major transitions of the cosmos is fundamental to indigenous spirituality and knowing. These markers: winter and summer solstice, spring and autumn equinoxes, the rising and setting of the sun, new moons, and full moons are expressions of the balance points in life. The stars, the plants, the animals all point us in the direction of wholeness. These points of balance are reflected in our bodies, in our bodily cycles, our emotional cycles and our relational cycles. When our cycles harmonize with the forces of the phenomenal universe one becomes acutely aware of the inter-being of all. The rituals and ceremonies are designed to part the veil
that we perceive exists between ourselves as humans and the rest of creation, including Spirit. With this parting, at-one-ment is available to those who are present to the presence.

The fifth and final element is the understanding that nature is the foundation of spiritual authenticity. Gregory Cajete in *Look to the Mountain* says: “A universal energy infuses everything in the cosmos and expresses itself through a multitude of manifestations. This also includes the recognition that all life has power that is wondrous and full of spirit. This is the Great Soul, or the Great Mystery, or the Great Dream that cannot be explained or understood with the intellect, but can be perceived only by the spirit of each person.” (Cajete, 1994, p. 44)

Indigenous knowing is at its essence a relationship, an experience, a dance with life herself. It’s primary assumption is that all is one. Eastern traditions provide a practice for reaching a state of being called Yoga, which means union. Indigenous traditions assume that the union, the Yoga, already exists and through the act of living consciously the perceived veil that separates us from one another, be it human, animal, tree or star, is parted and we can live in this lifetime in the experience of that oneness, fully awakened.

The ancient mystics, healers, and medicine people were not speculating when they taught that the ultimate goal of life is to become aware of the indivisible unity that is the Divine Ground of existence.

**Democracy**

How then might we begin to look at democracy as a foundation for indigenous spirituality and practice or at least a fundamental aspect of it? Democracy, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, literally means, rule by the people (from the Greek *demos*, “people,” and *kratos*, “rule”).

Within the context of ruling governments this definition might be useful, but within the context of social and cultural perspectives, this definition is vague and simplistic. True democracy from an indigenous perspective is not limited to western notions of “people.” True democracy includes all beings both seen and unseen. To limit the definition of democracy to just humans is a very western concept. This narrow definition eliminates the voices of those with whom we share our life, our planet, our universe and cosmos. Imagining a universal perception that understands, from the inside out, concepts of unity, oneness, and wholeness expands the definition of democracy to be all-inclusive.

Indigenous understanding of an “all-inclusive” kind of democracy assumes that the individual is an integral part of the whole but no more important than any other part. However, to fully understand the role of the individual within the context of the whole, there must be an experience of the Self as soul -- as eternal -- as sacred. Without this understanding and true experience of the Self, one cannot experience unity. This Self, then, is connected through generations to the Ancestors of the land, the air, the earth, the stars, the animals and birds.

The questions that reside at the core of this paper are: Does true knowledge of the Self reside in the mysteries and stories of the Ancestors? If one comes to know who they are and where they have come from do they have access to their cultural indigenous ways of knowing? When one remembers himself within his tribal context can he then participate in democracy, and, what are
his responsibilities within that context? Finally, in remembering and reclaiming these old ways, can an awakening, both personal and social, occur as a result?

Inherent in indigenous spirituality and ultimately awakening of the Self and our world is the profound engagement and mindfulness with the web of life, both seen and unseen, that is present in every living moment. This web is at the root -- the core or foundation, of what we might call or consider democracy.

Indigenous Spirituality and ways of being is not a known concept in the western world-view and requires a very different mind set in order to fully receive the transference of knowledge. This transference comes out of lived experiences with the forces of nature and the cosmos. Some of these forces are understood within the science of physics and biology, but some of the forces or powers of nature cannot be fully understood by the intellect; they require the suspension of held beliefs and assumptions that are part of the western mind and ideology.

Science, nor philosophy, can fully explain how it is possible that mind, consciousness, or spirit can influence nature. Masaru Emoto who did extensive research on water crystals showed the same water exposed to the music of Bach did not resemble the water crystals exposed to heavy metal music. Water crystals exposed to loving thoughts were beautifully symmetrical, while the same water exposed to hatred and anger were disfigured. This data seems to indicate that consciousness can directly affect physical systems. This assumption is at the foundation of indigenous spirituality. Within the indigenous paradigm prayer, ceremony, and ritual is designed to heal both the personal and the physical world in which we live.

If the goal of indigenous spirituality is self-knowing and awakening, is knowing the self the ultimate desire and goal? I would say, no, at least not in a Western context; which delves into the psychological conditions and circumstances of an individual life. The desired end of self-knowing within the context of indigenous epistemology is a knowing which exists within a specific cultural perspective and includes the entire world in which we live, both seen and unseen. This knowing encompasses self-knowing with a capital “S,” the God self or the soul. Cultural specificity is a vital element of indigenous spirituality, for the community, and its mythically authenticated traditions support a way of life and quality of thinking that embodies an ecologically informed consciousness. Healing and transformation, therefore, occurs not only at the personal level, but also at the cultural, global and cosmic levels as well.

The process of remembrance of ancestral knowledge within the framework of one’s own biological make up, and this coming to a deeper understanding of Self, is done through praying, dancing, reflecting, meditation, dreaming, walking, breathing, seeing, feeling and hearing the Ancestors guide and inform from within our culture of origin, from within the body, from the land and the cosmos.

Mark Matousek, a modern mystic says: “*The Mother, the Master holds up the mirror to remind us of our true nature. Sacred experiences and the contact with holy beings are the training ground for amnesiacs. It is a place to go to remember. In spiritual experience, there is always the sense of something intact being echoed. If I recognize anything of God, it is because I have that within myself.*"
If we do not know who we are, we cannot awaken to the wisdom held in our bodies, our own DNA. Each of us was brought into this lifetime with a biological make up that is determined by lifetime after lifetime of our Ancestors. Their dreaming, their intention, what we call in my tradition of Judaism, Kavanah, willed us into existence. Encoded in our bodies is not only the wisdom of the past, the promise of the future, and the holiness of the moment, but also the map of our purpose in being alive. Most of us will go through life oblivious to the duty required of our lifetime. Some of us will get glimpses of our duty and then turn away out of fear, indifference or laziness. There will be some, though, who will answer the call of the Ancestors, answer the voice of the sacred and the Divine, and come to know themselves and the task each of us has been incarnated at this time to do. In order to begin this journey of knowing, growing, and awakening, one must begin with self-knowing and this self-knowing, within the context of indigenous Spirituality, begins with a call to the Ancestors.

Ancestors

A definition of Ancestors is imperative, for there to be a comprehensive understanding of traditional tribal wisdom and knowledge. In the western paradigm we mostly think of Ancestors as dead people. We think of them as those who lived before us and are in our immediate family. In a gathering that I facilitated with a group of young college students, I asked them to bring pictures of their Ancestors for an altar that we were going to create together. Most of them brought pictures of their still living parents and grandparents. This, too, is not an uncommon perception among westerners.

What is meant by the concept of Ancestors from an indigenous paradigm has to do with the totality of cultural history, mythology, cosmology, ritual, relationship with the landscape, and world-view or philosophy of a people. Ancestors embody all that is related to an individual, to a culture, place, and community. They are our kin. Although Ancestors are our blood relatives, they also are all that contributes to our very existence. They are the soil from which we emerge and which holds and nourishes the food that we eat. They are the foods that grow in the soil and nourish our bodies. They are the animals that inform us how to live in relationship with the soil. These animal Ancestors teach us which foods are edible and which ones to avoid, as well as bring messages and teachings. Ancestors are the waters that quench our thirst and teach us of the rhythms of the cycles of time through the ebb and flow of the tides or the swelling and shrinking of the riverbank. Ancestors are the star nations and gift our cultures with the teachings of their push and pull, their magnetic fields, and their attributes that they selflessly share with the planet and the culture. Ancestors live in the air that we breathe that provides us with our first breath of life. They are in the fires that burn both literally and figuratively in and around us. They are the Spirits of those who came before and those who are yet to come. Ancestors are our future, our past, and our present all together in the rising of the sun and the setting of the moon. Ancestors are our memory of the time we have lived and the lives yet to unfold. Ancestors are the songs that emerge from our cells and the dances that lift us and carry us on the wings of time. Ancestors live in the soul of our language and the sounds, the vibrations that inform us through our sacred letters and their sacred form. Ancestors teach us at every crossroad of our life. They
share in every joy and each sorrow we encounter. Ancestors appear in unsuspecting places, assisting us with our journey through life.

Ancestors live as trees, flowers, soil, rocks, stars, winds, birds, echoes off canyon walls, snakes, the songs of the water as it falls over ledges and edges, clouds and rains, thunder, earthquakes, storms, sunrises, and sunsets. To come present in each moment opens our awareness to the presence of the Ancestors that inform our lives, our walk, and our path. The sacred texts, songs and stories of our individual and collective cultures are filled with teachings of our Ancestors. Some Ancestors are given names. Some names are human; some are tree names or plant names or animal names. Some Ancestors speak of their relationship to the elements or their teachings or the medicine that they carry, and some Ancestors are not given names but teach us nonetheless with their experiences and their wisdom. We do not always recognize the Ancestors, for we must be awake, aware, and alive in order to see, smell, hear, or feel their presence. They enter our lives everywhere and all the time and in the simple aspects of Creation: a bird, a butterfly, a rose, or a tree.

So, how might we begin to call to these Ancestors and why? There is a profound assumption that underlies this paper. That assumption is that people want to awaken in this lifetime. It presumes a level of dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs either in the world or within their individual life.

It has been my experience that with the transformation that is possible by recognizing who we are in context to our cultural origins, a kind of contentment, joy and freedom accompanies us for the rest of our lives. By entering into an ongoing dialogue and ritual with the ancestral world it is possible to cultivate an experience of oneness.

**Does true knowledge of the Self reside in the mysteries and stories of the Ancestors?**

The mystics and teachers of all spiritual traditions teach us that in the stories of the lives of those who have come before us live the map to oneness. The ultimate goal of all spiritual traditions is unity, awakening, and enlightenment, and samadhi, love. To know the stories that have brought each of us to this moment in time carries with it that map. The first step to cultivating a relationship with the Ancestors is personal preparedness. One must know, within, that this is something desired. To open the doors to the Ancestors brings with it the winds of the past and the stagnations of the present. It promises, however, to provide a guiding light for the future. The winds of the past can be torrential and painful but with tenacity, willingness and profound compassion a great healing is possible that will calm the winds and build an alliance with the spirits. To begin to open this door it helps to do this as a ritual. Opening to the Ancestors is a statement to the universe that you are opening the doors, lifting the shroud that separates this world from all others. It tells the universe with ones consciousness that one is ready to remember. (At the end of this paper you will find directions for performing this ritual.) To initiate this work we must ask ourselves what lies beneath us. What is supporting us in this lifetime? What came before? Why are things as they are? What choices were made and what legacy do I carry?

**What Lies Beneath Me**
What lies beneath me is the history of my cultures,
   Their cries of longing, their cries of war,
   Their cries of loneliness, their cries of despair.

What lies beneath me are the forgotten stories,
   Forgotten children, forgotten meaning,
   Forgotten homelands, and forgotten Gods.

What lies beneath me is my own story,
   The ancestral memories of genocide, exile,
   Poverty and pain. Migrations and hiding, pretending
   And lamenting the not knowing, not understanding,
   Not remembering, not caring.

What lies beneath me is the blood, the bones,
   The breath of my ancestors breathing me, dreaming me,
   Guiding me, and teaching me.

What lies beneath me is the great heart beat of the Mother,
   Her rage, her despair, her passion, her indignation, her grief,
   Her betrayal and her retribution, perhaps, yet to come.

What lies beneath me are the memories imprinted
   On the soles of my feet that see, touch, remember
   And ache as I walk upon the earth.

What lies beneath me is the emptiness created through the rape
   Of the mother.
   Removing her memories through trauma, theft,
   Violence and hate – abducting her blood, her bones, her fire and
   Her trust in order to sustain me here on her surface.

What lies beneath me is the memory of a time of knowing,
   Of connection, of relationship.
   Once known, once practiced,
   Once honored, now forgotten.

What lies beneath me is dis-ease, des-pair, dis-appointment and
   Dis-dain that is sung by the trees, the stones,
   The plants, the animals, the stars, the soil, the winds,
   The rains, the thunder and the light, the winged ones,
   The crawlers, the swimmers, and the mystical beasts.
What lies beneath me is the tenacity and courage
Of the human experience that my ancestors called upon
In order to live; to dream; to love.

What lies beneath me is the strength of the human soul
Which creates a new story out of the ashes of yesterday
And trusts somehow, someway that there is a tomorrow.

What lies beneath me is Kedosh Echad, the “Holy One”
Who sustains me and helps me
Remember what lies beneath me.
© Illana Berger 2001

The second step to cultivating a relationship with the Ancestors is acute awareness. Listening
depthly to nature, to our own heartbeat, to the serendipity of each day, each moment, and each
encounter brings with it teachings and information to guide, to sustain, and to inform our living.
Wallace Black Elk in Black Elk taught:

“Trees talk. They have a language of their own. All this green that you see, they
communicate. There’s a scent produced. Each plant gives out a particular odor or scent.
Then a little creature comes here and eats. . . These beings have balance, but humans
have lost it. . . Humans have lost their navigation in this world.” (Black Elk, 1990, p.34)

Acute awareness encourages one to be present in every moment to what is. Hidden in the
mystery of the moment lies not only the past but the future as well. Animals, in particular can
tell of an impending earthquake or of the approach of a stranger or threatening situation. Their
senses are keen enough to detect this. Our senses are also just as keen, however, we have let
these skills fall into disuse and so our ability of attunement has suffered as a result. Practicing
meditation in all forms will strengthen this attunement.

Brian Swimme in The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos said:

“Unless we live our lives with at least some cosmological awareness, we risk collapsing
into tiny worlds. For we can be fooled into thinking that our lives are passed in political
entities, such as the state or nation, or that the bottom-line concerns in life have to do with
economic realities of consumer lifestyles. In truth, we live in the midst of immensities and
we are intricately woven into a great cosmic drama.” (Swimme, Orbis Books, 1996)

Deena Metzger speaks of Manlova Mind, which is the mind of the elephant nation. They live in
such a way that honors the intelligence of each individual elephant. Each elephant has a purpose
in the culture and in every moment, every situation the individual elephants make up the “whole”
mind of the nation. This is a teaching for us in the possibilities inherent in living in community,
living as a global nation of sacred human beings, honoring the sacred intelligence of each and
every being and together attuning to the call of the moment.

If one comes to know who they are and where they have come from do they have access to
their cultural indigenous ways of knowing?
The third step for cultivating a relationship with the Ancestors is sharing and embodying the stories. In Judaism, returning to our highest selves through transformation of our lives -- our Spirits -- our intentions, is called Teshuvah. This is a renewal of the soul that is possible when we enter into relationship with the Ancestors, the past, and the stories. We must do our own shattering of forms, in the same way that the Kabbalist’s teach about the vessels of Creation shattering to bring life to the phenomenal world. When we realize how we have internalized our own oppression, our own hatred, and our fear of the magic in our culture, then the forms, which enslave and diminish our life, are shattered.

Beginning with the stories of our immediate families to the stories of our migrations, to the stories of relationship with the land, to our birth and connection to the Divine; we travel into the arms of the Ancestor spirits guiding our lives. It is here that we begin to remember the old ways.

Rupert Sheldrake states that in “traditional societies there is no sense of a progressive development: what happens now repeats what happened before, and this repetition always refers to the first time it happened, in the mythic time of origins. This time was in the past, but it is also in some sense present now, because the original patterns are continually repeated.” (Sheldrake, 1988, p. 255)

Many rituals are associated with stories of origins that re-enact and commemorate a specific event in time with the intention to unite from generation to generation the present with the past and the future. The effectiveness of rituals for any culture seems dependent on the people’s conformity to the practices handed down by the Ancestors. The similarity of the present practice with the past is imperative to establish a connection with the Ancestors. Sheldrake again posits that,

> [W]e may be living in an amnesic world that is governed by eternal laws. It is possible that memory is inherent in nature; and if we find that we are indeed living in such a world, we shall have to give up many of our old habits of thought and adopt new ones: [or ancient ones] habits that are better adapted to life in a world that is living in the presence of the past – and is also living in the presence of the future, and open to continuing creation.” (Sheldrake, 1988, p. 326)

Immersion into the dominant culture assists in the dulling, numbing, and deadening of our awareness of the fragments that still exist of our original ways, our original instructions, and our duty to Creation. As we continue to melt into the universal caldron that is American or European or Western, we not only lose our distinction, but we lose access to those fragments that do remain and that can guide us home to that place of awakening and of being/knowing that is specific to us as a people. With this loss of memory is also the loss of hope for healing and sustainability for not only ourselves as a people, but for each of the diverse beings that make up the consciousness of this magnificent planet, cosmos, and universe.

**When one remembers himself within his tribal context how can he then participate in democracy**

Many of us now carry the ancestry of many peoples who come from vastly different traditions and customs. Through the passage of time, we have begun to blend these obligations.
Nonetheless, each of us carries a piece of the whole wheel. Each nation, each race, each community, each person carries the medicine needed at this time for the healing of those whose circles we share and encounter. This is what I would call participatory democracy. It is only once we have met our true Self, healed the wounds of the past, healed our relationship with the Ancestors, and can tell our stories will we be able to enter the circle of relations as a participant, healer, and peacemaker.

David Peat in Lighting the Seventh Fire said:

“Traditional songs are said by anthropologists to be lost, as are certain languages. But, as far as I can understand it, these songs, languages, and traditional ways are still alive because they have existence as spirits, energies, and powers. . . . Although traditional ways may appear to be lost, some Elders are confident that when the time is right this knowledge will come back. Like the grass that grows each spring, it will reappear in dreams or during ceremonies.” David Peat

As we remember, share the stories, participate in a democracy that is all-inclusive, speak the languages of the old ones, and awaken to our inseparability to our unity, social change is imperative. Ram Das’ teaching;” Be before C (see)’’ is the foundation of social change. When we change and awaken to who we are the world awakens with us. We become a pebble in the pond of transformation.

**The stages of change begin with the Self**

1. Become aware of your body, your physical ness, your breath, your limbs, your walking, your eye movements.
2. Become aware of your feelings, your emotions, and your reactions.
3. Become aware of your mind, your thoughts, and your fantasies when they happen.
4. Become aware of your being in life, your aliveness, what being alive feels like, is.
5. Become aware of your uniqueness, your individuality, and your distinctiveness from any other creature on the planet.
6. Become aware that you are not aware of any of this that you just are.
7. Become aware that you are not, that you do not exist but by the thought of the Creator.
8. Become aware that you and the Creator and Creation are one. (Winkler, 1998)

This, our path to balance, enlightenment, harmony, or whatever name we choose to call it is the end place of all indigenous science, the foundation of democracy and the catalyst for social change.

**Ritual to the Ancestors:**

- Spend the day in silence.
- Fast with just water and solitude.
- Greet the rising sun.
With the rising of the sun make an offering to Creation in gratitude of the life you have been given. Breathe in the glory of the day, the light, all the elements and Spirit.

- Meditate for 20 minutes following the sun’s rising.
- Take yourself to a place in nature that calls to you.
  - Find an alliance in this place (a tree, plant, flower, river etc) and bring an offering with which you will call your Ancestor’s to yourself and ask them to guide you, instruct you, teach you and support you for the rest of your life. This offering should be something precious to you that you are willing to give away in honor of this sacred journey are about to embark upon.
  - Once the offering has been made, your prayers have been said, sit down with your journal and pen and allow the Ancestors to speak to you by writing stream of consciousness in your journal.
  - Do not engage the mind. Do not read what you have written. Be with the experience. Be mindful and notice with all your senses what is going on around you and inside you.
  - When complete express your gratitude and return home.

- Once home,
- Construct an altar with images of your Ancestors. These Ancestors are both human and nature. Include the beings that assisted you in this day.
- Once complete (conscious of colors, directions, intentions, and objects) light a candle with your prayer of gratitude.
- Bid the setting sun farewell with a salutation or prayer and go to sleep to dream.

Keep track of your dreams.
Kirkpatrick Sale’s observation about the industrial approach to production and consumption clarifies what has been generally ignored by constructivist learning theorists who equate emancipation of the individual with gains in social progress, justice, and democracy. In Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution (1995), Sale describes how the intergenerational basis of community self-sufficiency had to be undermined in order to create the form of individualism that would be dependent upon the products of an industrial system in order to survive. As he put it:

All that ‘community’ implies—self-sufficiency, mutual aid, morality in the marketplace, stubborn tradition, regulation by custom, organic knowledge instead of mechanistic science—had to be steadily and systematically disrupted and displaced. All the practices that kept the individual from being a consumer had to be done away with so that the cogs and wheels of an unfettered machine called ‘the economy’ could operate without interference, influenced merely by invisible hands and inevitable balances and all the rest of the benevolent free-market system (p. 38).

As constructivist learning theorists such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire share the same taken-for-granted cultural assumptions with the classical liberal theorists who provided the ideological justification, including moral legitimacy, for the earlier and, now, current phase of the Industrial Revolution, they did not recognized how their ideal of the experimentally, critically reflective individual is essential to the industrial, capitalistic system they often criticize.

Sale’s observation about the connections between replacing intergenerational knowledge of the community (the commons) with consumer products highlights another feature of the commons that needs to be more fully understood. The earliest understanding of the commons was the pasture, streams, woodlands, animals, and so forth that the peasants shared and governed in terms of local norms and decision making. The commons can also be understood as having a symbolic dimension which encompasses everything from a common language, systems of decision making, technological knowledge, patterns of metacommunication, narratives, and so forth. In effect, the commons encompasses everything that has not been privatized and monetized. The commons may also include, depending upon the mythopoetic narratives and traditions of the culture, the shared ways of stratifying wealth and the exercise of political power. In order to avoid romanticizing the commons it is also important to recognize that it also includes the shared norms that govern market relationships—including the conceptual and moral norms that are the basis of colonizing the commons of other cultures. It needs to be recognized, however, that these shared norms and ways of thinking represent a perversion of the ancient idea of communal trust and intergenerational responsibility.
The idea of the commons as encompassing everything commonly shared now needs to be understood as far more inclusive than the earlier understanding of the shared resources and responsibilities connected with the bioregion. Our understanding of the commons can be rescued from the confusion that may accompany the broad inclusive definition given above by introducing another concept—which is that of “enclosure.” The first legal and ideologically based assault on the commons of England occurred in 1235 with the Statute of Merton. The legal justification for enclosure, which was the code word for privatization, was that it would lead to improvements and thus to extracting greater rent (The Ecologist, 1993, p. 23). Since that time the concept of enclosure has not only been associated with privatization of the land and its resources, but with the commodification of labor, ideas, and everything else that is now being organized and controlled by an industrial process. When enclosure was extended to how work was shared within the community, it led to reversing the idea that work is returned, to work is paid—at the lowest possible level. Enclosure, in effect, can be understood as the exercise of power that privatizes, stratifies, marginalizes, excludes, and shifts the decision making process from the local community to outside centers of power. The multiple processes encompassed by this seldom used word are now disguised by the godwords of “development,” “modernization,” and “progress.”

But the logic of industrialization, and the new forms of enclosure that it dictates, is not the only way of understanding the commons—or what remains of it. There are still aspects of the commons that have not been privatized and integrated into the industrial approach to markets, and it is these aspects of the commons that need to be identified in order to understand how the educational process can be used to address eco-justice issues as well as contribute to what Vandana Shiva refers to as “earth democracy.” Where the cultural groups are knowledgeable about the self-renewing systems they depend upon, the commons is sustained through the practice of local democracy. The modern expression of enclosure, on the other hand, usually involves a shift in the locus of decision making to corporate offices and, now, to institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and international treaties that regulate trade. The difference between local decision making about what is shared in common and the political process that accompanies various forms of enclosure can be seen in how the former leads to keeping the focus on the common good—for the members of the human and natural community. An example of decision making in a community that understands that the unit of long-term sustainability is the local ecosystem that the human community is dependent upon can be seen in how the people of the Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation of Ontario, Canada still harvest the wild rice as part of the commons. Even with the introduction of machines, the harvesting is still regulated through community meetings. Decisions are made about where machine harvesting may be carried on, and where the traditional canoe method of harvesting is more appropriate. Limits on the size of the harvest for both approaches are set, and violators may, as a result of a community meeting, be denied harvest rights for the rest of the season (The Ecologist, 1993, pp. 13-14).

Many Anglo and Euro-Americans, as well as ethnic groups from other parts of the world, exercise local decision making in ways that help to revitalize the beliefs and values as well as the other material aspects of the commons most directly related to their sense of identity and group memory. Local decision making may even extend to a wide variety of communal
interests: the use of water, prohibitions against the use of certain chemicals, small cooperative efforts, nurturing of the arts, preservation of recreational areas, and so forth. Local decision making may even extend to the creation of a local currency that enables the members of the community to exchange services and local products in a way that represents the community’s decision about what represents fair value. But not all of these examples of local decision making that address common interests are based on the same awareness that is found among many indigenous cultures, which is that humans must practice moral reciprocity and earth democracy with the non-human world. Rather, most of the non-indigenous cultural groups in North America that practice environmental stewardship still view themselves as separate from the land—but open to learning its lessons.

The enclosure of the commons now takes a new form of expression, such as the privatizing of the airwaves and, now, even what is most distinctive about humans—thought and communication. Private ownership is easily recognized as a form of exclusion, as is the pervasiveness of the corporate control of the media that filters the news and orchestrates consumer demand. But modern technologies are less well understood as expressions of enclosure and exclusion. The assembly line, as the Luddites recognized, marginalized the workers’ craft knowledge, control over their own time and pace of work, and the sense of personal satisfaction that accompanies producing something useful for others. Experts who must first create a sense of fear and limitation in order to create the illusion that their services are superior to the non-monetized intergenerational knowledge that sustained patterns of mutual assistance, and thus was part of the commons, now occupy nearly every niche in mainstream society. This self-interest masked as altruism further marginalizes the local systems of self-sufficiency and governance. Mega-stores such as Wal-Mart and industrialized food outlets such as McDonald’s also are expressions of how market forces represent new forms of enclosure. The role of computers in the process of enclosure can be summarized in the following way: they monetize the most basic attributes of humans—thought and communication; they marginalize the importance of face-to-face intergenerational communication that is essential to maintaining what Gary Snyder refers to as “the contract a people make with their local natural system” (1990, p. 31); they privilege abstract and reductionist thinking over embodied and relationally derived knowledge; they exclude the mythopoetic narratives that connect people’s lives with the larger symbolic/spiritual world that for many cultures includes other forms of life; they privilege the subjective judgment of the individual in a way that makes the empowering and hard-won traditions that communities are based upon contingent on the individual’s subjective perspective and mood; and they further undercut the already tenuous awareness in western culture that life needs to be lived in ways the ensure that future generations will find a sustainable environment (Bowers, 2000).

How constructivist-based educational reforms are socializing students to accept the same classical liberal and thus reactionary assumptions that are shared by transnational corporations and institutions such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization can be seen by recalling the cultural assumptions that underlie the constructivist learning theorists and comparing them with the assumptions that underlie the transnational corporations and international institutions that have been created for the purpose of overturning the policies of national governments that impede free trade. The assumptions that are shared by the major constructivist theorists such as Dewey and Freire represent change as the dominant feature of everyday life. Thus, the educational goal is to promote critical reflection and experimental inquiry—both of which assume that the traditions that are the basis of different cultures are
irrelevant. If the student should become aware of traditions, their task is to reconstruct them. Constructivist theorists, with the exception of Dewey, emphasize that the one true method of thinking they advocate leads to individual autonomy—which involves a continual process of becoming, humanization, and thus authenticity, as Peter Roberts summarizes Freire’s vision of man’s “ontological vocation” (2000, pp. 49-50). Both Dewey and Freire promote human-centeredness; that is, their approach to educational reform is anthropocentric in that the individual’s role (or social group for Dewey) in promoting progress does not need to take account of the way natural systems are being degraded. Lastly, these “fathers” of constructivist learning theories represent their one-true approach to knowledge as being more evolutionary advanced than other ways of knowing. They are universalists (which is another term for colonizing thinkers) in the sense of advocating that their respective one-true approach to knowledge should be adopted as the standard for the rest of the world’s cultures.

As students construct their own knowledge and, under the guidance of teachers functioning as “transformative intellectuals”, direct the course of their own emancipation, the following will be ignored and thus excluded from their education: (1) an awareness of differences in cultural ways of knowing, including an understanding of how different cultures disrupt or nurture the commons; (2) an awareness that cultures encode and intergenerationally renew knowledge in different ways—and that youth in these diverse cultures learn from different cultural sources and from different activities; (3) an awareness that cultural diversity is essential to maintaining biodiversity; (4) an awareness of the different ways in which cultures maintain a balance between market related activities and the non-monetized relationships and activities of everyday life; (5) an awareness of how the traditions of different cultures contribute to patterns of moral reciprocity and mutual aid, as well as traditions that are sources of privilege and marginalization; and (6) an awareness that the two most important questions that students need to ask are: “What needs to be conserved that contributes to the well-being of the commons? What needs to be changed—and how can it be done in a way that involves the fullest participation of the community?”

How the forces promoting the globalization of a western model of an industrial and consumer dependent lifestyle share the same ideology that underlies the constructivist educational reforms proposed by both Dewey and Freire can be seen in the agenda of the World Trade Organization. The WTO is the creation of misnamed “conservatives” groups—corporations, chambers of commerce, and governments led by politicians indoctrinated by their university experience to accept the ideas of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century classical liberal thinkers as having the same universal validity as the law of gravitation. John Locke, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and, later, Herbert Spencer anticipated the core ideas of Dewey and Freire with their emphasis on equating change with progress, viewing critical reflection as free of cultural influence, adopting an anthropocentric view of human/Nature relationships, interpreting cultural differences as expression of backwardness and, for Spencer, as the working out of the evolutionary process, and assuming the rest of the world’s cultures should adopt the western theorist’s one-true-approach to knowledge.

However, local knowledge and thus local resistance has not been entirely overwhelmed by neoliberal theorists who have represented the intergenerational knowledge that has sustained cultures such as the Quechua and Zapotec, as well as ethic groups in North America, as a source of backwardness and oppression. Local farmers in different regions of the world have resisted
the introduction by Monsanto of the terminator seed that was genetically designed to produce a non-geminating seed, thus requiring farmers to purchase new seeds every year. Resistance may, in fact, be growing. In Nigeria, the petroleum industry is being challenged by local residents for fouling their water and land. Peasants in India are resisting being displaced by the building of dams, the privatization of water, and the industrialization of agriculture. And in Central and South America resistance is focused on the actions of oil companies, the industrialization of agriculture, and the disruption of local economies by free trade agreements. Many other indigenous cultures such as the Quechua and Aymara resist being brought into the industrial model of development by continuing their traditional practices of earth democracy that have sustained them for over eight thousand years (Apffel-Marglin, 1998). The rapid spread of a more ominous and violent form of resistance to the western project of globalization can be seen in the growing number of followers of Sayyid Qutb, the most important Islamic revolutionary thinker of this century. Freire’s ideal of achieving the “ontological vocation of humanization” through the liberating influence of critical inquiry, is not likely to be seen as contributing to the recovery of the glory days of seventh century Pan-Arabism.

As I do not wish to explain again the key assumptions and mode of knowing advocated by the different constructivist theorists that support the ideology of the transnational corporations (Bowers, 2000, 2003), I will instead summarize how the constructivist-based educational reforms create a greater dependence on the market while at the same time undermining the intergenerational knowledge that represents, within different cultures, the community-level sources of resistance. The emphasis that Dewey and Freire place on the student using one mode of knowing (critical reflection, experimental inquiry, reliance on subjective judgment and experience, the openness to “becoming”) as the basis of constructing their own knowledge about the world contributes to a fundamental disconnect between youth and the intergenerational knowledge that co-evolved with changes in the local bioregion. Again, it must be emphasized that not all the cultural forms of intergenerational knowledge contributes to standards of social justice that most of the world would agree with, nor to sustaining the viability of the local commons. However, it also needs to be recognized that the symbolic basis of moral reciprocity, the local systems of mutual support, skills, and knowledge that reduce reliance on a market economy and the practice of earth democracy are not likely to be derived from the students’ construction of knowledge. The earlier constructivist approach to classroom learning in the nineteen twenties, which has been called the child-centered phase of the progressive education movement, did not result in students becoming aware of gender bias, the clear cutting of forests, and the environmentally destructive agricultural practices that led to vast amounts of topsoil being blown away during the early years of the depression. Nor did the students become aware of how their thought processes and self-identity were influenced by the culture’s root metaphors that were encoded in the language they used in taken-for-granted ways. Freire had a similar record of not being aware of problematic cultural assumptions. He only recognized late in his career his gender bias, and both he and his followers continued to ignore the connections between conserving language and conserving biodiversity. In addition to not being aware of the evolutionary conceptual framework he shared with other proponents of modern development the writings of Freire and his followers continue to be silent about the importance of revitalizing the commons as a source of resistance to economic globalization.

For a theorist who upheld experimental inquiry as more advanced than any other cultural knowledge system, Dewey’s failure to acknowledge its limitations in the culturally diverse world of Chicago and New York (not to mention the other non-western cultures he visited) is as
surprising as Freire’s many silences. Some readers will argue that it is unfair to criticize Dewey on the grounds that he ignored that cultural and environmental genocide of the late nineteenth century. After all, my critics will argue that the awareness of the rapid degradation of the environment did not really take root until the publication of Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). In dismissing my criticisms of Dewey, it should be kept in mind that in Dewey’s early years the indigenous cultures spread across the United States were being decimated; that Henry David Thoreau and John Muir were among the best selling authors of Dewey’s most formative years, and that a number of species, most notably the bison, were being killed to the point of near extinction—which was being widely reported in the press.

Contrary to the thinking of Dewey and Freire, the sources of resistance to reliance on the industrial approach to production and consumption, which are expressed in the ability to be more self-reliant as a community, are handed down and renewed in ways that take account of changes in the commons—as well as changes resulting from outside influences. This process of intergenerational renewal of the commons takes place through mentoring, personal observations, face-to-face interactions, embodied experiences, narratives, questioning, insights into alternative ways of doing things, and participating in ceremonies that transform the ordinary nature of everyday life by connecting the participants to a larger sense of purpose and meaning. Professors who write about the need for teachers to become “transformative intellectuals,” and to teach (indoctrinate) students with the idea they should question everything, have misunderstood that genuine resistance is not in listening to the teachers who urge them to question everything, but in being able repay a work obligation through the use of a skill learned from others, to engage in a conversation, to tell a story, to play an instrument, to mentor youth, to pass on knowledge that heals, to repair some aspect of material culture, to read what the environment is communicating about its cycles of renewal and the ways in which it is being stressed, to prepare and share a meal, and to participate in the other non-monetized activities and relationships that are the basis of community. In short, genuine expressions of resistance means becoming less dependent upon the industrial prescribed lifestyle that is degrading the environment and is a major reason for the global spread of poverty. Resistance also involves acts of affirmation of the relationships that sustain the commons. These community-centered patterns of self-sufficiency are also the basis of local democracy—as Robert Putnam tells us (1993).

Sale’s observation about the need to destroy the traditions of self-sufficiency and moral reciprocity within communities in order for the Industrial Revolution to succeed represents another point of convergence between the constructivist learning theorists and the ideology that is now used to justify transnational corporations being held accountable only to the Darwinian law of survival of the fittest. Freire and his many followers who promote emancipation from all of the cultural practices of the previous generation unwittingly perpetuate the double bind that characterizes the global spread of the industrial approach to production and consumption. While they view themselves as critics of capitalism and all forms of exploitation, their efforts to make emancipation an ongoing process, with no consideration of what needs to be conserved, promote the form of individualism that will be more dependent upon consumerism. At the same time, their recommendation that there is only one approach to knowledge, that is, critical inquiry, undermines the many ways in which diverse cultures intergenerationally renew themselves. The followers of Freire exclude the learning of skills that contribute to individual and community self-sufficiency, and they exclude the importance of the many forms of learning that are based on face-to-face relationships. Thus, the double bind connected with their approach to constructivist learning is that in undermining the community networks of support and learning, their approach
to education contributes to the kind of individual who will need a job that requires no special skills—and which means working in an industrial setting that is driven by the need to create technologies that require fewer workers.

In making this criticism I want to emphasize again that I am not saying that all community networks, practices, and moral norms should be beyond criticism.

To summarize: the core idea in Freire’s thinking, which Dewey also shares, was articulated in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1971) when he wrote that “to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it” (p. 76). This idea is restated in Pedagogy of Freedom (1998) where he writes that “in the context of true learning, the learners will be engaged in a continuous transformation through which they become authentic subjects of construction and reconstruction…” (p. 33). His idea that critical reflection is the only basis of a humanizing praxis has the same imperialistic sound to it as E. O. Wilson’s claim that all the world’s cultures should adopt evolution as their guiding metanarrative, and that scientists are the best judges of what beliefs and values people should live by (1998, p. 265).

Missing in the thinking of Dewey and Freire is an awareness of the eco-justice issues that educators should be addressing. These include: (1) environmental racism, (2) the economic domination of the South by the North, (3) the need to revitalize the commons as centers of resistance to the industrial culture that produces the vast quantities of toxic wastes that are deposited close to where the poor and marginalized live—and that requires the exploitation of the resources of Third World cultures, and (4) the need to avoid degrading the environment in ways that will diminish the lives of future generations. The tradition of western theory that is so ethnocentric that it does not recognize the knowledge and value systems of other cultures, and that is based on the same deep core assumptions that underlie the industrial culture that is now being globalized, seems a problematic basis for thinking about transformative educational reforms—especially if it is assumed that “transformative” is interpreted within a Deweyian and Freirean conceptual framework. As I have attempted to suggest here, the revitalizing of the commons is not only essential to reducing the rate and extent of environmental degradation, it also represents an alternative to western economic imperialism that is being increasingly resisted by cultures who do not share the basic western assumptions. Whether the word transformative can be interpreted to include the multiple ways of knowing that characterize in different cultures the exercise of earth democracy, ecological intelligence, and the renewal of intergenerational place-based knowledge of non-monetized relationships and activities is the challenge that the environment will not let us ignore.

References


Educating Cities: From Education for Democracy to Democratization of educational practises

Alicia Cabezudo
School of Humanities and Arts. University of Rosario, Argentina &
Director Educating Cities Latin America

By the end of the twentieth century a wave has washed over the world. That wave is called globalization. It is a wave both economic and cultural and it goes ahead and introduces itself without rules in countries and regions. Globalization tells us about emergent markets noisily falling down. It shows economic advances, concentration of wealth and expansion of poverty. Globalization transversally splits society, generating illusions and disillusions. Globalization leads to deep uncertainty.

Thus, globalization and uncertainty are part of the reality of the world we live in and it has a direct influence in our cities—those artificial spaces where each society represents itself, trying to turn them into trustees of their individual and collective desires.

The governments of the cities, poles or node centers of different nations, regional or continental areas emerge as first instance juridical-institutional referents to consolidate Latin American democratic systems and to promote the political socialization of its inhabitants.

We are at an historic time when the risk of de facto governments and military coups, that prevented every possibility of constitutional governments, are over. Economic and cultural globalization stands up as a new risk for keeping equity in the development of social policies, participatory democracy and protection of Human Rights in the cities.

The globalization process that characterizes global economy at the end of the last millennium, with a strong accent in concentration of wealth and high degree in technology brought poverty and marginality to our region.

There has been an increase in the precariousness of working conditions, unemployment and corruption. Deterioration of institutional life and weakening of representative democracy without any mobility to switch to other participatory mechanisms have had a great impact on the social and economic spheres of our cities. The result is absolutely devastating.

The structural poverty sectors had not substantially changed their previous situation of scarce or null participation in the distribution of wealth. Still, they are suffering deeper marginality: higher infant mortality rates, teenage pregnancy, lower performance and even desertion from primary schools, alcoholism, etc. In addition some other scourges also increased, such as domestic violence, children delinquency, citizens’ insecurity, addictions, environmental destruction, children’s work, etc., characteristic of extreme poverty processes.

To these we must add the advent of thousands of new poor people. These are unemployed workers who have lost their jobs and their social security, without any alternative or any social services to assist them.