

Re-imagining
Teacher Professional Development and Citizenship Education:
Lessons for Import from Colombia

Abstract:

This paper examines the role of teachers in the implementation of citizenship education in Colombia. Consistent with its highly-decentralized school system, Colombia's National Program of Citizenship Competencies was developed with the participation of many local, national, and international partners. Among the most involved and most critical participants were the primary implementers of the reform: teachers. Teacher training is important to student achievement, but in a context that also seeks to teach democratic citizenship, training must be attentive to reciprocal learning and shared leadership. This paper highlights the impact of teacher training in one rural department and how a cross-cultural collaboration between Colombian and US-based educators benefited practitioners on both sides. Four key lessons on the design and delivery of professional development on citizenship education (and more broadly) are offered for educators and policymakers: the use of democratic pedagogy; the promotion and extension of teachers' self-awareness; the cross-pollination of perspectives across all levels; and a humble and inclusive expertise.

James M. Noonan

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Prepared for the 54th Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society

March 3, 2010

Introduction: A Broader Definition of Democratic Citizenship

Learning is a social process. Students and teachers bring unique perspectives to the problems being pored over in any lesson – whether it is deciphering a passage in a book or solving a quizzical math problem. When students work independently, they are integrating what they have been taught in a way that they can explain later. Even the student who schemes to get out of their work is, in a perverse way, navigating relationships. Because learning is a social process, education must be seen as more than the means for individual achievement and personal gain. It must also be seen as a vehicle for teaching the skills of creating and sustaining healthy relationships and communities.

Education theorists, philosophers, and policymakers have been making precisely this case for decades. And they've been right. Recently, there has been a renewed attempt to connect the social emotional purposes of education to the health and vitality of the democracies they support. It is, in many ways, a natural connection to make. Garrison (2009) writes that “[e]ducation, like democracy, is fundamentally empowerment. Both provide the participants with the means to shape and direct their experiences.” After all, students today will be leaders tomorrow, but the effectiveness of their leadership will depend on how much practice they have had leading.

A democracy is predicated on the conviction that, in the long run, the collective wisdom of the people is better for a society than the judgment of a small cohort of elites. In order for the promise inherent in this idea to be fully realized, however, people must be well educated about their responsibility as citizens, a responsibility that extends well beyond voting on a semi-regular basis. If people are going to be empowered to make decisions, they must also be prepared to make informed decisions and to be able to accommodate others who have opinions which are sometimes radically different from their own. The competencies essential to the exercise of democracy – including respectful communication, active participation in decision making, the resolution of conflicts without violence, and tolerance for different points of view, among others – are not inherently held, but they

can be taught. It is from these beliefs – that democracy requires a common set of core competencies from its citizens if it is going to thrive and that these competencies can be taught – that citizenship education emerges.

Citizenship education is not a new idea to education reformers. In fact, researchers and policymakers have written numerous case studies during the last decade documenting dozens of largely government-led efforts to define what it means to be an active citizen in a democracy and to enlist schools in the process of nurturing citizens in this mold (Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo, 1999; Cogan and Derricott, 2000; Cox, Jaramillo, and Reimers, 2005). And yet, the United States – one of the most enduring and stable democracies in the world – has seemed largely impervious to the citizenship education movement. Its nearest relative may be the movement to integrate social emotional learning (SEL) into schools (Greenberg, et. al., 2003; CASEL, 2005; Cohen, 2006). But even this is happening on a school-by-school, district-by-district basis. The U.S. has no binding national standards in any subject – or at least, no government- or privately-led effort that has been adopted with any consistency. Even state standards have largely neglected non-academic subjects such as citizenship or social emotional learning.¹ This is despite the fact that, according to a Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, two-thirds of the U.S. public believes that schools have a responsibility to support the social and emotional needs of their students (Rose & Gallup, 2007, p. 41).

It seems that the semantics of “citizenship education” today are as liable to confuse people as inspire them. We think, falsely, that it means studying for the citizenship test or that it is some jingoistic cheerleading meant to prop up a perceived deficit of patriotism. Jonathan Cohen, of the Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE), has argued that the skills of democratic citizenship are closely linked to the skills favored by Americans in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll – that is, the

¹ To date, Illinois is the only state that has adopted statewide social emotional learning standards. The Illinois standards, while not specifically alluding to democratic citizenship, have overlap with citizenship competencies. Some of the skills referenced in both include perspective-taking, perseverance, cooperation, negotiating solutions to conflict, appreciation of differences. (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004; CASEL, 2005)

skills of social emotional learning, including social awareness, self-awareness, and participation. It is critical to teach “the skills and dispositions that provide the foundation for collaboration and democracy,” he writes, and research has proven that children can in fact learn to become more socially and emotionally competent when schools turn their attention to the task (Cohen, 2006, p. 228).

Given this, citizenship education can be defined as a set of competencies that link democratic citizenship to more broadly-defined and widely-embraced skills such as pluralism, conflict management, even peacemaking. Teachers tasked with implementing such programs must receive professional development programs that are not only substantive in content but also sensitive to context. And at the risk of cutting into the patriotic idea that the best ideas are home-grown, I suggest that some of the most innovative laboratories for teaching citizenship well (and supporting teachers to do the same) are found offshore. This paper will highlight the effects of one country’s experiments with citizenship education and how a cross-cultural collaboration with educators in the United States has benefitted practitioners on both sides. Drawing on the lessons learned from a pilot project in rural Colombia, the author will offer a set of recommendations for developing professional development programs on the teaching of social emotional and citizenship competencies.

Citizenship Education in Context

Colombia has a delicate relationship with democracy. On the one hand, it has experienced more than fifty years of uninterrupted democratic elections – one of only three countries in Latin America that can make a similar claim. On the other hand, most of that time has also seen its democracy marred by a persistent internal armed conflict, initially fueled by left-wing guerrilla groups (the largest and most enduring of which is the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC). In recent years, the conflict has become increasingly murky and indiscriminate. The 1990s saw private landowners arming themselves into militias which gradually coalesced into the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), also known as the paramilitaries. And with the end of the Cold War –

and its stable funding sources for the insurgency – both guerrillas and paramilitaries have waded into drug trafficking and kidnapping to sustain their operations. As a result, a more pervasive culture of violence has flourished in Colombia.²

Naturally, widespread exposure to community violence has enduring effects on children. Children who are witnesses, victims, or perpetrators of violence experience a wide array of complications, including post-traumatic stress disorder, increased depression, cognitive and academic delays, and increased aggressive behaviors (Guterman & Cameron, 1997). Chaux (2009) points out that the early development of aggression in children is “particularly worrisome, since it has been found that aggression tends to be very stable,” therefore perpetuating violence in the long-term (p. 85). In Colombia, the armed conflict represents an obvious threat to the stability of its democracy, but it also represents a severe obstacle to the development of peaceful, community-minded, civically-engaged citizens. A program that teaches the skills of citizenship *and* peacemaking (or which defines citizenship, at least in part, as peacemaking) could, in theory, inoculate some children against the enduring effects of violence. Chaux (2009) explains that “educational prevention efforts can target competencies that can help break the cycle of violence. Therefore, education programs should pay particular attention to developing cognitive and socioemotional skills related to these variables. One example of this approach is the Colombian Program of Citizenship Competencies” (p. 86).

Despite the temptation to design a unifying set of standards and classroom practices, many educators understand that it is not that simple (nor, for that matter, that sensible). Cohen (2006) notes that “[n]o curriculum or ‘best package’ can adequately address the complex issues” inherent in any schoolwide intervention to teach the skills of SEL and citizenship (p. 210). The decentralized structure of Colombia’s system of education meant that a first step in the development of the Program of

² According to *El Tiempo*, there were 16,140 murders (33 per 100,000 people) in 2008. While this represented a more than 40% decrease since 2002, it remains among the highest rates in the hemisphere. (“Homicidios: La Tasa Más Baja En 30 Años.” (2009, January 21). *El Tiempo*. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3278554>; accessed May 9, 2009.) By comparison, the homicide rate in the U.S. in 2007 was 5.9 per 100,000 people (http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/data/table_16.html; accessed May 12, 2009)

Citizenship Competencies was to collect best practices from departments and municipalities throughout the country, the sum total of which would lead not to a national curriculum, but to a set of guiding standards and a portfolio of programs and practices that could help teachers and schools reach the benchmarks set by the Ministry of Education.

Policymakers from the Ministry set to work identifying a diverse team of educators to develop the standards while simultaneously seeking out exemplars of “best practices” in citizenship education from around the country. Sixteen of these best practices were compiled into a book published by the Ministry of Education and called *Quince experiencias para aprender ciudadanía... y una más*.³ In the introduction to the book, Minister of Education Cecilia María Veléz White wrote,

It is irrefutable that across contexts and with diverse methodologies, many Colombian teachers are developing [citizenship skills] and have given us a picture of their creativity and of the commitment that accompanies it. Their models and pedagogical projects, in many cases, transcend the walls of the school and have had their students assume responsibilities and take action to transform the reality of their communities, overcoming problems and constructing real solutions... (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004a, p. 13)

The process of developing the competencies, combined with collecting the exemplars, was the kind of the top-down, bottom-up hybrid reform that knowledgeable (and therefore justifiably skeptical) writers often advocate but rarely find. Tyack and Cuban (1995) described such a reform this way: “if teachers work collaboratively with each other and with policy advocates, sharing goals and tactics, supporting each other in assessing progress and surmounting obstacles, then such an approach...could work better than mandates from above” (p. 83).

These complementary directions converged in 2004 at a National Forum for Citizenship Competencies in Bogotá where more than 3,000 local, national, and international educators and experts discussed theories of citizenship education and mulled implementation strategies. Writing about

³ *Fifteen experiences to teach citizenship... and one more*. The book can be downloaded from <http://www.mineducacion.gov.co/cvn/1665/article-85451.html>.

the Forum, Patti and Cepeda (2007) explained that “the acquisition of social, emotional, and civic engagement skills of young people were placed on par with academic achievement” (p. 110). By this point, the competencies had been completed and reflected a blend of civic values and social and emotional competencies. They were divided into three strands: (1) *convivencia*⁴ and peace; (2) democratic participation and responsibility; and (3) plurality, identity, and valuing differences. Each strand was broken out at various grade levels and across a range of different kinds of competencies (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004b). Reflecting on his experience at the forum, Steven Brion-Meisels, the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Learning at Peace Games, noted that teachers seemed to embrace the competencies because they “grew out of a grassroots effort, spoke to real community needs, and were constructed to maximize teacher creativity” (Brion-Meisels, 2004).

However, citizenship education does not stop with the definition and dissemination of standards. In fact, far too many exercises in standards-writing lose momentum once the standards have been published and they wind up sitting on a shelf or taking up server space. Translating the standards from the page into practice is the most important part of the process and one that is too often neglected. Patti and Cepeda (2007) insist that effective teacher training be part of any comprehensive program of citizenship education, since teachers are the vehicle through which new skills and competencies are transmitted: “[a]ll pedagogical changes require teacher development... [since] young people need to receive direct instruction in social skills” (p. 122). Reimers (2006) corroborates this point when he identifies school and classroom climate as the most critical factor in predicting levels of civic knowledge and future civic participation.

Policymakers may think that they know what to do and how to do it – and, in fact, they may be right – but they are not the ones teaching the children. The success or failure of any education reform, including citizenship education, relies on the talents and discretion of thousands of teachers. Of

⁴ According to Chaux (2009), *convivencia* does not have a precise English translation. The nearest approximation is “peaceful interaction and coexistence among members of a social group” (p. 90)

course, this is not new nor is it unique to citizenship education. It is also easier said than done. Tyack and Cuban (1995) famously observed that teachers are the gatekeepers, for better and worse, to the success or failure of many attempted reforms: “When educators view reform demands as inappropriate, they are skilled in finding ways to temper or evade their effects” (p. 79).

In Colombia, teachers played a central role in the development, dissemination, and implementation of the citizenship competencies. Like the United States, Colombia has a highly decentralized system of education, so while the Ministry of Education was able to create the Program for Citizenship Competencies and then oversee the process of identifying and agreeing on the standards, they were limited in their ability to manage the program’s implementation. Chaux (2009) explains that the citizenship competencies “state what is expected of students...but [do] not explain how they might be developed” (p. 88). To fill this gap, the Ministry has supported “the evaluation, diffusion, and expansion of structured programs” to help teachers choose a program that will help students meet the standards (Chaux, 2009, p. 88). Thanks in part to the Ministry’s support of such programs, there are an increasing number of local, national, and international NGOs committed to educating citizens about democracy (Reimers & Villegas-Reimers, 2006; Patti & Cepeda, 2007).⁵

A Partner From Outside the System

Peace Games never considered itself a program to teach citizenship specifically.⁶ Instead, it developed as a response to rising youth homicide rates in the United States in the early 1990s and was founded on a belief that peacemaking can and must be taught as an alternative to violence. In

⁵ There may be a case study in the works that tells us how such a process could be replicated in the U.S. Because the Colombian and U.S. education systems are structured so similarly, the process of designing and implementing the Program of Citizenship Competencies strongly resembles the process of designing and implementing statewide SEL Standards in Illinois. Both convened diverse groups of educators, researchers, and policymakers to create the standards. Once finalized, both sought to identify, evaluate, and disseminate a portfolio of programs to help schools implement the standards rather than choosing a “one-size-fits-all” curriculum. And both depended on the collaboration of local leaders with outside organizations, including Peace Games.

⁶ Since this paper was first written, Peace Games has rebranded itself as Peace First (www.peacefirst.org). The Colombian program continues to operate as Juegos de Paz.

this way, it reflected Chuax's (2009) contention that teaching the skills of peacemaking can inoculate children from the cycle of violence. At various points throughout its evolution, Peace Games has been called a conflict resolution, violence prevention, school climate, social justice, and social emotional learning program. And in fact, it has been all of those things to some degree.

The organization's evolution from a one-day festival in 1992 to a more comprehensive program happened largely organically. In 1999, Peace Games launched an ambitious whole-school model built around a full-time staff person hired to work in a school and support a climate of peacemaking. The whole-school model was developed gradually and in consultation with teachers, administrators, and Peace Games staff, all of whom realized that short-term interventions or one-day programs were just barely scratching the surface of the problem. The model included five program areas – students, school staff, families, volunteers, and school climate – although its primary activity was a skills-based curriculum in kindergarten through eighth grade taught by young adult volunteers. The curriculum was divided into two parts. The first semester focused on developmentally appropriate skills, taught using a combination of cooperative games, children's literature, visual arts, role plays, and conversation. The second semester used these skills to help students identify problems in their community and then design a "Peacemaker Project" that would create student-directed community change and showcase the students as peacemakers. In addition to the curriculum, Peace Games offered school partners annual professional development, outreach to families, and a number of school-specific initiatives to build positive school climate (like a Reflection Room, Peaceful Recess campaign, or "Peacemaker of the Month" program).

By 2004 – when Steven Brion-Meisels, the Director of Research, Evaluation, and Learning was invited to present at the National Forum in Bogotá – Peace Games was implementing the whole-school model at six schools in Boston and three in Los Angeles. It was also beginning partnerships in New York and Chicago. Steven brought with him to Colombia a decade's worth of lessons learned about working with children, teachers, young adult volunteers, and communities. His three-day

workshop in Bogotá introduced participants to the model and pedagogy of Peace Games. What made his presentation stand apart from many of the other international programs, however, was that an enterprising former Peace Games volunteer from Bogotá had negotiated a publishing contract to adapt and translate the Peace Games curriculum for a Colombian context.⁷ This, combined with seed money from the Ministry of Education and the interest of education officials in the rural province of Norte de Santander, set the stage for a pilot project in 2006.

Juegos de Paz: The Intersection of Peacemaking and Citizenship

The pilot project ran from January to June 2006 and was funded through Phase 1 of the Project for Rural Education, which meant that three of the five schools would be *escuelas nuevas*. *Escuelas nuevas* are designed for rural education and consist of several satellite multi-aged classrooms in sparsely-populated rural municipalities are linked to a central organizing institution. Classrooms are essentially one-room schoolhouses taught by a single teacher. Students combine self-paced independent learning with collaborative activities, and teachers convene regularly with their peers for meetings and peer coaching. The training team consisted of three Colombian trainers and three North American trainers. With a total of 45 teachers coming from the five schools, six different grade levels, and profoundly differing contexts, it was important to construct a training that met the Ministry's goals (to make clear connections between Peace Games and the Citizenship Competencies and then to ensure that teachers were able to teach the curriculum well) and also the personal and professional goals of the teachers themselves. The most promising sign came early in the first training. Shortly after the introductions, the training team asked participants to share some of their own goals

⁷ The volunteer's name is Silvia Diazgranados. A clinician-in-training who had worked with demobilized paramilitary combatants, Silvia had volunteered to teach Peace Games for one semester while studying in Boston in 2002. After translating the curriculum in 2005, she enlisted two colleagues from the University of Los Andes (Berta Cecilia Daza and Lina Saldarriaga) and coordinated the pilot project. Since then, they have continued to support and evaluate "Juegos de Paz" projects throughout Norte de Santander and Colombia. In February 2010, they signed an affiliate agreement with Peace Games and incorporated as an independent non-governmental organization in Colombia.

and expectations for the week and found, thankfully, that they mirrored those of the trainers.⁸ Despite this common ground, the trainers understood very clearly that they were entering a context that was vastly different from their experience.

The pilot project called for two trainings of four days each. The first, held in January 2006, introduced Peace Games and built the capacities of teachers to implement the program and support each other. The second, held six months later in June 2006, had teachers and school groups report back, create action plans for sustaining their work, and prepare themselves to train and support their colleagues. In between the two trainings, each school received two visits from members of the training team. During the visits, the trainers conducted evaluations – administering surveys and focus groups with students and teachers – and observed classrooms. (Some observations were during a Peace Games lesson, but others were just a way to have the teachers and students help orient the trainers to their context. After all, it is more respectful to have the host of a party give you the house tour rather than showing yourself around. The same principle applied here.)

Having participated in their share of professional development sessions, the training team was all too familiar with Lieberman’s lament: “What everyone appears to want for students – a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others – is for some reason denied to teachers when they are the learners” (Lieberman, 1995). A more engaging professional development was all the more essential in this case, since it was no secret that the rural, close-to-conflict environment of Norte de Santander was new to everyone on the training team – the three North Americans *and* the three Colombians (all of whom were from Bogotá). To pretend that they understood the day-to-day experiences of the participants would have imperiled their credibility and set up impenetrable obstacles to the mutual respect that everyone needed to be successful. As with the relationship between

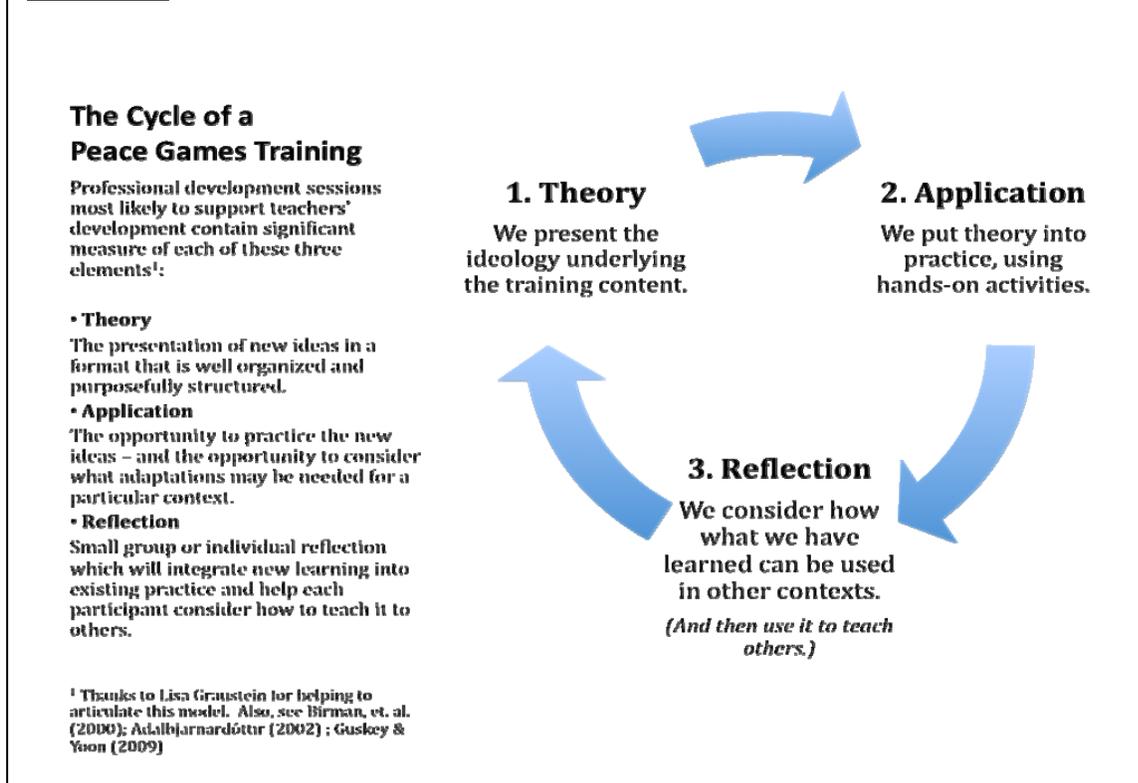
⁸ For example, teachers reported that they wanted to “address practical knowledge, not just theories” and to make sure that the “work has a personal impact” – two goals that, while unstated, were discussed often among the training team (Diazgranados, Daza, and Saldarriaga, 2006).

any teacher and their students, the success of the training was highly *interdependent* on the relationship between the training team and the participants.

The workshops in Norte de Santander were designed around a training model articulated by Peace Games staff. (See Figure 1). First, the team sought to present new concepts that would be consistent across all groups (*theory*). These included the structure of a Peace Games lesson, the lessons' connection to citizenship competencies, and how the project would be evaluated. Theories were presented primarily in a large group and through a mix of lecture-like presentations and conversation. Second, participants were presented with as many opportunities to put these new ideas into practice as possible (*application*). These included the co-facilitation of cooperative games, presentations of sample lessons in grade-level teams from across school sites, and the opening of each day with participants' sharing poems they had written on the first day.⁹ In all cases, leadership was held entirely by the participant (but guided by a trainer) and feedback was given by the group (either about the content of the leaders' presentation, the quality of their leadership, or both). And finally, one of the most essential parts of the workshop was the "Consolidation Groups" held for the last hour of every day (*reflection*). In these groups – facilitated by a member of the training team assigned to each school – the school team talked about the day's activities and attempted to consolidate new learning with what they knew about how it could work in practice. They discussed what they liked, what they didn't understand, and most importantly what adaptations they needed to make the concepts more accessible to their students. Good teachers adapt curriculum to fit their classes (including from year-to-year, as new groups of students respond differently to the same curriculum), and the training team tried to use consolidation groups to help participants begin thinking about necessary adaptations while they were still being oriented to the material.

⁹ The "I Am From" poem (or "Yo vengo de..." in Spanish) was adapted from educator Linda Christenson. It was used as a way to let people introduce themselves through the lens of their unique cultures, as well as to introduce a typical "Peace Games activity."

FIGURE 1



If implemented effectively, these three training components (theory, application, and reflection) would build and fortify the capacities of participants to the point that they would, with support, become effective trainers and coaches for their peers. This way, not only would the program grow more efficiently, but it would give participants an opportunity to refine their practice and be seen as leaders by their colleagues. In fact, if done well – and supported well – it would teach far more about leadership than the workshop alone.

Lessons Learned

There have been few attempts to understand the effects of teaching citizenship on students but even fewer to understand how it impacts teachers. Adalbjarnardóttir (2002) explains that since “teachers have a key role in organizing constructive and meaningful experiences for the students in citizenship education, it is important to explore how they make sense of this work both personally

and professionally” (p. 133). In the years since the pilot, Peace Games staff have reflected on their work and considered what made it successful. Happily, some of their clearest lessons were also the ones supported by what little research does exist on best practices in professional development. Hopefully, these experiences will lead to further study of what teachers learn, how they learn it, and how they apply it to increase their own and their students’ capacities as citizens (and peacemakers).

Teaching democracy means practicing democracy

Cox, Jaramillo, and Reimers (2005) remind us that “it is not possible to conceive of the students as future active citizens if their learning experience of citizenship has been predominantly passive” (p.21). This is true whether the students are children, adolescents, or adults. Teachers cannot be effective facilitators of democratic practices if their own learning experiences reflect something contrary. In the pilot, the pedagogy balanced conversation with experiential activities, but another important part of democratic practice was reflected in the continual revision of the training agenda. The training team met every night to assess what they had done and to review the proposed schedule for the following day. On several occasions, the next day’s schedule was rewritten entirely. Sometimes, it was because the time budgeted for a topic was insufficient. At other times, it was apparent that new topics needed to be introduced. The Consolidation Groups were particularly effective for letting participants educate the training team about what they wanted to learn more about or what was not making sense. In fact, it was from a Consolidation Group with one school site that the trainers became aware of simmering tensions between the teachers and their administrator and decided to include a whole-group session on “conflict resolution with adults.”

Like good teachers, good trainers are willing to go “off script” and let their students guide them in new directions. Dewey (1938) explained that the educator has a responsibility for not only *what* they teach but also *who* they teach (p. 56). Unless students are participating and engaged with the material, they are unlikely to learn anything. The same is true when it comes to citizenship: citi-

zens must feel like they are being responded to, at least some of the time, in order for them to feel like participation is worth the effort.

Change the way teachers see themselves, and they pass it on

Without consciously listing it as one of the goals of the training – or, for that matter, without realizing what they were doing – Peace Games set out to change the way teachers saw themselves and their students. For many teachers, the pedagogy of experiential learning was new and risky. In order to take the risks with their own students, they needed to feel comfortable taking risks themselves and feel what it was like to experience success as a result of that risk-taking. The most useful tool on the trainers' part (and the one hardest to quantify) was a relentless confidence in the teachers' abilities and a conscious attempt to create a culture of appreciation and encouragement. When teachers took risks by volunteering to lead games, they were paired up with one of their peers and a trainer met with them in advance to discuss and practice what they would say and how they would do it. Risks were rewarded with gratitude and appreciation from the whole group.

Willie (2000) explains that “[t]he essential relationship between teachers and students is nurtured by confidence and trust. Teachers cannot educate students in whom they have no confidence and students cannot learn from teachers in whom they have no trust” (Willie, 2000, p. 256). Confidence is an act of faith, but it is not a quality reserved for the idealist only. It is practical, too, since “[s]tudents in whom teachers have confidence are reluctant to do less than their best because of their mentor's investment in hope” (p. 257). In addition, teachers earn the trust of students in whom they have confidence. Learning is a vulnerable experience, with ample opportunity for failure. Teachers who encourage (and model) mistake-making will be seen as authentic and genuine partners. This combination of confidence and trust leads to mutual respect and the gradual evolution from a learning *environment* into a learning *community* (Willie, 2000, p. 262).

The cultivation of a learning community at the Colombia training helped teachers generate new ways of seeing themselves and their students. One teacher explained at the training in June that the way she approached classroom conflicts had changed to include greater self-awareness:

Peace Games has encouraged me to create new ways to look at conflicts and to look for new ways to solve unpleasant situations by promoting a positive environment. ...[It] has helped me to reflect and to want to be better. For example, if a kid hurts someone else with his words, what am I going to do to correct that and what am I going to say? I can't stay quiet because the kids will learn from that, but I also need to be careful of the way I speak and the choices I make. (Diazgranados, et. al., 2006, p. 3)

And if this teacher is able to see her students in a new way – and to nurture similar confidence in them – then there is a reasonable expectation that the confidence (and the learning which accompanies it) can be passed on further still. It is additionally encouraging that the majority of the teachers trained during the pilot became trainers themselves.

Cross-pollinate across schools, grade levels, hierarchy, and more

The third strand of the Citizenship Competencies emphasizes *plurality, identity, and valuing differences*. Diverse perspectives – and the ability of people to incorporate perspectives different from their own – are fundamental to a healthy democracy. Rawls (2001) explains that in a just and democratic society “[w]hat is to be regarded as a common asset...is the distribution of native endowments, that is, the differences among persons” (p. 75). Having a group in which there are a variety of talents and points of view makes possible a greater number of complementary connections between people. This is not to say that there will not be tension, disagreement, or conflict, but even these help strengthen groups when facilitated well.

The training team established a “home” for participants at the end of each day when school teams – teachers and administrators alike – convened in Consolidation Groups. However, people belong to many communities simultaneously, and it is important to help people navigate as many of

them as possible, as effectively as possible. For instance, a new first grade teacher from an *escuela nueva* belongs to her school team, but she also belongs to the community of *escuelas nuevas*, the community of first grade teachers, the community of women teachers, the community of young teachers. Introducing her to other colleagues teaching first grade – which she did not have in her school team (where only one teacher from each grade was represented) – allowed her to experience what Birman, et. al. (2000) describe as “a shared professional culture” in which teachers who have some essential element in common (such as teaching the same grade) can cultivate a common understanding of instructional practices and commiserate about the unique challenges of teaching first grade. Having a workshop that lasted four full days allowed trainers the luxury of introducing each teacher to as many of their communities as possible. And when the introductions were accompanied by an activity that each teacher could experience and reflect on in a meaningful way, the variety and distribution of talents among the group flourished.

Real expertise means deflecting expertise

With a proliferation of programs designed to teach citizenship skills – or its closest U.S. corollary, social emotional learning – policymakers run the risk of creating a culture dependent on experts. That is, teachers and schools will look to outside programs to have “The Answer,” and then wait to have their work validated by experts who may have good ideas and resources but who know little about the context in which particular schools operate. This deference means that many valuable adaptations that would have made material more accessible to students are lost, devalued, or never made in the first place. Programs like Peace Games may have tools and resources that add value to a classroom, but it is the teachers and administrators who are the best authority on their students and the context in which they teach and learn. Adalbjarnardóttir (1994) gently reminds policymakers that “[u]nlike an outside trainer, the classroom teacher spends 5 full days a week with the children. When social conflicts occur, he or she can use the opportunity to work with the children on these problems

in a constructive way” (p. 410). Any intervention must be flexible enough to equip teachers with the resources, skills, and confidence to adapt activities when authentic “teachable moments” surface.

But in order to do this effectively and in a way that lasts beyond the trainings, it becomes the responsibility of the “experts” – in this case, the training team – to show some deference to teachers and their professional discretion. Some of the most important skills needed to implement any reform are what Freidson (2001) calls “tacit skills” – those skills gained not from a training but through experience and over time in a particular context (p. 25). Humility is a quality rarely mentioned and too infrequently valued by community-based organizations or NGOs working in schools. This is why the Peace Games trainers regularly emphasized that while they had expertise on the curriculum or methodologies, the participants possessed valuable and indispensable expertise on their students. Besides which, they alone would be tasked with translating the concepts into classroom practice. Ultimately, a hybrid of the two expertises were necessary for a successful intervention. The debrief of activities or games regularly included questions not just about how the game taught peacemaking but also what adaptations could be made to it. The best experts are the ones who insist that they are not experts – and teachers ought to be skeptical of any one who claims otherwise. In fact, this may be part of the reason why so much professional development falls on deaf ears.

Juegos de Paz Through the Eyes of the “Experts”

Researchers who have studied what makes an effective professional development have found it difficult to determine with much certainty what works across contexts. However, a cursory review of recent literature on professional development suggests that the institute designed for the pilot was consistent with a range of some of the currently accepted best practices: structured workshops; outside expertise; extended quantity time; follow-up (which occurred through site visits); and a willingness to adapt activities to context (Guskey and Yoon, 2009; Villegas-Reimers, 2007). These conclusions validate what Peace Games trainers intuited from their personal experience and what anecdotal

evidence has corroborated: the trainings to support citizenship education in Colombia had meaningful short-term impacts on teachers' skills and perceptions of themselves and as a result they were better-prepared to support citizenship competencies in their students. With the investment of continued follow-up and network-building with the schools, there is reason to hope that the students these schools graduate will be well-equipped as peacemakers and the leaders of a sturdier democracy.

Reciprocal Learning: How Peace Games Changed

If learning is a mutual, two-way process between teachers and students, as Freire (1970) suggests, then one would expect to see evidence of how the work in Colombia changed Peace Games in addition to how it changed the teachers. And in fact, it did change Peace Games. In the years following the pilot, Peace Games undertook many new training initiatives in the United States which combined with other strategic decisions and eventually led to a new model for working with schools.

One of the first U.S. training initiatives following the pilot was a year-long teacher training series with five schools in Boston. Based in part on the experiences and lessons learned in Colombia, the grant application to fund the training series proposed that Peace Games offer schools 15 hours of training, 10 hours of coaching, and a subsidy to cover the cost of substitutes (which would, in turn, allow teachers to attend training during the school day). Training sessions drew on material created especially for Colombia, including the conceptual framework for peer coaching, and also created new material based on a U.S. context and the stated needs of teachers. Coaching sessions allowed teachers to identify an area of their practice that they wanted help with – whether it was leading a high-risk game, facilitating a classroom meeting, or redesigning recess or choice time – and have a Peace Games trainer work one-on-one with them for up to two hours. The enthusiasm and feedback from teacher participants were encouraging signs that teacher training and support could become a viable method for the way the organization worked with schools in the U.S.

Looking to streamline its whole-school model to make its work more efficient and more enduring, Peace Games undertook a strategic planning process in 2008. For an organization that has undergone a near-constant evolution since its beginnings, this most recent self-examination was not surprising, but one of the key outcomes of the process was a decision to emphasize teacher training and coaching. Instead of offering episodic professional developments that needed to conform to already-crowded professional development calendars, Peace Games would complement whole-school workshops with a smaller “teacher cohort” at each school which would receive more targeted leadership development and coaching. With the model set to be launched and refined during the 2009-2010 school year, it is too early to say whether this new approach will translate seamlessly to a U.S. context, but provided the organization maintains its sense of self-examination, humility, and respect for teacher discretion there is reason to hope that it will continue to evolve.

Meanwhile, the work in Colombia continues to grow at an exponential rate. With ongoing support from the original Colombian training team, local government officials in Norte de Santander applied for and received funding from the European Union to train 90 additional teachers at five additional schools, and beginning in January 2010, the second phase of the Project for Rural Education (the first phase of which funded the pilot) will support the expansion of Peace Games to 50 more schools throughout the province. With this potential for growth, Peace Games has a stable laboratory for experimentation and innovation in Colombia. To support local efforts while still learning from local leaders, Colombian trainers – with the support of Peace Games staff – have plans to set up a local NGO to pursue new training partnerships and sustain existing networks.

Conclusion

A team of educational researchers surveying citizenship education in the Americas in 2005 concluded that the process undertaken in Colombia was “a promising methodology that could be extended to other countries in the region” (Cox, Jaramillo, and Reimers, 2005, p. 33). The same is true

of the strategies and model employed by Peace Games in Colombia. The training model used was based on the pedagogy of progressive education and experiential learning (Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1938). However, it was also grounded in contemporary research about effective teacher professional development (Birman et. al., 2000; Adalbjarnardóttir, 2002; Guskey and Yoon, 2009).

Education reforms come and go, but schools remain. Democracies depend on schools to prepare young people to be active members of their communities, especially as they grow older. This includes their roles as workers, voters, role models, and possibly parents. In a country like Colombia, where democracy has been under persistent threat, the need to create an expansive definition of citizenship is essential to its self-preservation. The United States may lack this same urgency, but just because its democracy is not in the same kind of omnipresent danger does not mean that citizenship education is superfluous to the U.S. education system. If its citizens do not take care of it, any democracy will atrophy from disuse. Democracies depend on citizen participation if they are to survive and thrive, and cultivating a dynamic understanding of democracy that includes civic engagement, social emotional learning, and peacemaking is the mission of citizenship education (and one of the primary missions of schools themselves).

If citizenship education is to be done well, it will require hundreds of programs and interventions to respond to schools and communities in hundreds of unique contexts. These programs must include comprehensive and compassionate support for teachers. As Villegas-Reimers and Reimers (1996) remind us, teachers are a formidable force for change as long as they are motivated and mobilized: “[o]nly by recognizing that teachers are also learners and that their motivation and energies are essential components in any effort to change the conditions under which students learn will the potential of 60 million people be put into the service of the noble aspirations of...education reforms...at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (p. 490). What Peace Games did in Colombia was effective at changing the way teachers taught and the way students learned, and its methodolo-

gies were largely intuitive: a humble approach, diverse groupings, time for practice and reflection. It is not unreasonable to think that with modest support and reasonable motivation the methodologies can be replicated.

At a conference several years ago, speaking to an audience largely made up of teachers, the author and educator Pedro Noguera advised them, “Work like the future of this country depends on what you do. Because it does.”¹⁰ His words call teachers to redouble their efforts to prepare children and young people to be leaders in their community and their world – and while the primary task in this formidable effort belongs to teachers alone, it is the urgent responsibility of government policy-makers, community organizations, and experts of all stripes to be their unconditional allies.

¹⁰ Spoken at a plenary session of the Peaceable Schools Institute at Lesley University in July 2002.

WORKS CITED

- Adalbjarnardóttir, S. (1994). Understanding children and ourselves: Teachers' reflections on social development in the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (10)4, pp. 409-421.
- Adalbjarnardóttir, S. (2002). "Citizenship Education and Teachers' Professional Awareness." In *Citizenship Education and the Curriculum*, Eds. D. Scott and H. Lawson. Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing, pp. 131-149.
- Birman, B.F., Desimone, L., Porter, A.C., & Garet, M.S. (2000, May). Designing professional development that works. *Educational Leadership*, 57(8), pp. 28-33.
- Brion-Meisels, S. (2004). Civic engagement in Colombia: Learning from the struggle to create civil society. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- Chaux, E. (2009). Citizenship competencies in the midst of a violent political conflict: The Colombian educational response. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(1), pp. 84-93.
- Cogan, J. and Derricott, R. (1998). *Citizenship for the 21st century: An International Perspective on Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Cohen, J. (2006). Social, emotional, ethical, and academic education: Creating a climate for learning, participation in democracy, and well-being. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(2), pp. 201-237.
- Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning. (2005). *Safe and sound: An educational leader's guide to evidence-based social and emotional learning programs*. Chicago, IL: CASEL.
- Cox, C., Jaramillo, R., & Reimers, F. (2005). Education for citizenship and democracy in the Americas: An agenda for action. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank.
- Dewey, J. (1938/1997). *Experience and Education*. New York: Touchstone.
- Diazgranados, S., Daza, B.C., Saldarriaga, L.M., & Venegas, M. (2006). *Formular e implementar una propuesta de pilotaje para el currículo educativo Juegos de Paz de kinder a 5o grado en 5 municipios de Norte de Santander*. Bogota, Colombia: Universidad de Los Andes, Unpublished report.
- Diazgranados, S., Saldarriaga, L.M., Daza, B.C., Venegas, M., Brion-Meisels, S., & Noonan, J. (2007). *Peacemakers in Colombia: Implementation and evaluation of Peace Games in rural areas of Norte de Santander: Executive summary*. Boston, MA: Peace Games, Unpublished report.
- Freidson, E. (2001). *Professionalism: The Third Logic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Garrison, W. (2008, January). Democracy and education: Empowering students to make sense of their world. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(5), pp. 347-348.

- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R.P., O'Brien, M.U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). School-based prevention: Promoting positive social development through social and emotional learning. *American Psychologist*, 58(6/7), 466-474.
- Guskey, T. and Yoon, K.S. (2009, March). What works in professional development? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(7), pp. 495-500.
- Guterman, N.B. and Cameron, M. (1997). Assessing the impact of community violence on children and youths. *Social Work*, 42(5), pp. 495-505.
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2004). *Illinois Learning Standards: Social Emotional Learning Standards*. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm.
- Lieberman, A. (1995, April). Practices that support teacher development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(8), pp. 591-596.
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. (2004a). *Quince experiencias para aprender ciudadanía... y una más*. Bogotá, Colombia: Fundación Empresarios por la Educación.
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional. (2004b). *Formar para la ciudadanía: ¡Sí es posible! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer*. Bogotá, Colombia: MEN.
- Patti, J. and Cepeda, A. (2007). Citizenship competencies in Colombia: Learning from policy and practice. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 25(1), pp. 109-125.
- Rawls, J. (2001). *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Reimers, F. (2006). "Education and Social Progress." In *Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, V. Bulmer-Thomas et. al. (Eds.) New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 427-480.
- Reimers, F. and Villegas-Reimers, E. (2006). "Educating Democratic Citizens in Latin America." In *Developing Cultures: Essays on Cultural Change*, L. Harrison & J. Kagan (Eds.) New York: Routledge.
- Rose, L. and Gallup, A. (2007, September). The 39th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward The Public Schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(1), pp. 33-48.
- Torney-Purta, J., Schwille, J., & Amadeo, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Civic Education Across Countries: Twenty-four Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project*. Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.
- Tyack, D. and Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering Toward Utopia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Villegas-Reimers, E. and Reimers, F. (1996). Where are 60 million teachers? The missing voice in educational reforms around the world. *Prospects*, XXVI(3), pp. 469-492.
- Willie, C. (2000). Confidence, trust and respect: The preeminent goals of educational reform. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(4), pp. 255-262.