

Transformation Through Teacher Education: A Case Study of One Social Studies/History Methods Course in Kenya

Michelle Dawn Cude

James Madison University, United States

Florence Kisirkoi

Maasai Mara University, Kenya

Abstract:

How do we equip future teachers to create a more sustainable world? This study follows one teacher educator from the US seeking to bring change and support new pedagogical ideologies within Kenya. The research question is, **Can one class on transformative teacher education make a difference in training future teachers?**

Key words: comparative education, teacher education, Africa, Kenya, social studies.

Introduction

Recently, headlines in the Kenyan newspapers announced the massive failure of thousands of Form Four (high school senior) students on national exams, ostensibly linked with internal corruption and inadequate preparation. So, who failed—the students or the system? The woes of Kenya’s bumpy road to democracy frequent the front pages (Daily Nation, 2018). Certainly, the need for the next generation of engaged young citizens, capable of implementing positive change, is well understood (Aguayo & Eames, 2017; UNESCO, 2014; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011; Wilmot, 2004) But how do we equip our students as future citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values to create a more sustainable world? This question is echoed around the globe. Most academics agree that education is the obvious answer, but how to manage the sea change is less obvious. Many agree that it must start by training the teachers to grow the habits of mind and skill sets in our students that promote the vision and values of a sustainable future (Aguayo & Eames, 2017; Tomas, Girgenti, & Jackson, 2017; UNESCO, 2014; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Corresponding author: cudemd@jmu.edu

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The phrase Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and many variations of this term, have come to echo a common call for education that supports sustainability, meaning-making, equality, peace, and social justice (Bamber, Bullivant, Glover, King, & McCann, 2016; Payyappallimana & Fadeeva, 2018; Teise & le Roux, 2016; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). In 2015, UNESCO defined ESD as including the “skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development and global citizenship education (ESD/GC)” (UNESCO, 2015). Clearly, ESD/GC cannot be taught in the same old lecture methodologies of the past.

Research Question

Therefore, the question becomes, how can we train new teachers on the pedagogy which enables the message of global citizenship and sustainability to thrive? To do so, schools of education and teacher colleges must embrace a new way of training future teachers, especially the social studies/history teachers who prepare future global citizens (Adler, 2008; Hess, 2008; Noddings, 2005; Parker, 2008). This research study proposes one approach to training preservice teachers in new methodologies and attitudes as a case study model. It seeks to examine what can be learned from one semester’s methods course that attempted to change the traditional lecture approach. The research question that guides our study is: **How can one class on transformative teacher education make a difference in training future teachers?** What can be learned from the case of this class taught at a Kenyan university in September-December, 2017?

Review of the Literature

A review of the research grounds this study in the greater global initiative toward education for transformation: student engagement, active learning, social justice, global-mindedness, and sustainability. It also echoes the calls for more research on examples of implementation of learner-centered/ESD-focused teacher training. There appears to be a relative dearth of studies demonstrating how a particular model is effective in implementing those facets of change (Payyappallimana & Fadeeva, 2018).

Concern for the current status of education and the need for transformation is certainly not limited to Kenya, but is rather a global reality. In the words of a South African scholar, “Educational change in South Africa, as elsewhere, is both global and local.” Many studies document crises in education across the globe. For example, scholars in the United States are deeply concerned that schools are sacrificing depth for breadth, leaving students with a

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superficial coverage of much content that lacks meaning for them personally. According to Saye, “Contemporary schooling has been broadly criticized for failing to engage students and nurture meaningful learning (Saye, 2013, p. 90).” This three-year study by researchers (Saye, 2013) identified that transformational, impactful teaching was occurring in only 20 percent of the classrooms in the six states they studied. On the other side of the Atlantic, researchers in England warn that their country is slipping backward due to the new governmental policies of decentralization and “knowledge-based education” which, they say, conflicts with an emphasis on global citizenship and values-based education (Bamber et al., 2016; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). These studies frequently call for reform in teacher education to address these concerns (see also Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015). The broad-based study in the four nations of the United Kingdom specifically suggested “more pedagogical approaches that support Education for Sustainable Development/Global Citizenship (ESD/GC) within teacher education” (Bamber et al., 2016, p. 6).

Countries on the African continent are in similar crises in education where well-meaning reforms fail to translate into new practices in the classroom. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) had high hopes for eradicating poverty and inequity in education, the realities on the ground fell short in many places, especially in African countries (Graetz & Friedman, 2018; United Nations, 2015). For example, in Botswana, a study published last year described the “tension between learner-centered approaches mandated by policy and the reality of teacher-centered practices” (Chadwick, 2017, p. 755). McDermott and Allen (2015) report on the similar conditions and challenges in the education system of Sierra Leone in their study of a teacher training program. Though this training program yielded a more informed set of literacy teachers, they were limited by health and economic constraints in the rural areas of Sierra Leone. Research in South Africa finds that although the constitution supports interdisciplinary learning about environmental sustainability, knowledge and values, it is missing in many classrooms across South Africa (Teise & le Roux, 2016). These studies demonstrate broadly that teacher training needs to address these new methodologies to create education for transformation. According to the literature reviewed, even when ESD/GC initiatives are supported generally, many countries still struggle to obtain documented results demonstrating successful implementation of global citizenship literacy in schools (Chadwick, 2017).

State of the Educational System in Kenya

Education in Kenya is similarly in crisis. Reform of the current 8-4-4 system of education has been long overdue. It had been developed to prepare a learner who would be self-reliant; however,

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the summative evaluation by Kenya Institute of Education in 2009 revealed that the curriculum and its implementation were teacher-centered with the main purpose of preparing learners for examinations and not for the purpose of learning (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Furthermore, teachers were ill-prepared to implement curriculum in a manner that would lead to a self-reliant learner (KIE, 2009). Research revealed that learners were not even learning. The UWEZO (2013) assessment report indicated that only half of the children in Standards 1-8 (aged 6-16 years) acquired the highest numeracy competency expected of Standard 2 learners.

Assessment was limited to summative assessment for examination preparation, and the majority of teachers rarely used formative assessment for purposes of learning, but rather drilled learners for high marks in national examinations. There was fierce competition in the learning environment. No attention was paid to learners' individual differences and different learning styles. It was reported that more than 350,000 out of 611,952 students who sat for the exam in 2017 scored a "D" grade or below (Aduda & Wanzala, 2017). The country celebrates the high scores, while those who score "D" or below are soon forgotten. This contributes to high unemployment, idleness, and an increased crime in the country.

Education Reform in Kenya: Learner-Centered Curriculum and Methods

Against this background, the Basic Education Curriculum Framework was introduced in 2017. The new curriculum emphasizes development of the following core competencies: Communication and Collaboration, Self-efficacy, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Imagination, Citizenship, Digital Literacy, and Learning to Learn (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Values will be emphasized, and learners will be provided the opportunity to develop and apply their skills and knowledge. Learner-centered, active teaching approaches are central in the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, two of the essential skills of the social studies classroom (Frayha, 2013; Hess, 2008; NCSS, 2010; Waring & Robinson, 2010). Learners encounter multiple perspectives to explore, rather than a rigid simple recall of information. Such skills and values constitute the necessary training for future global citizens (Noddings, 2005; Parker, 2008; Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017; United Nations, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Critical thinking and problem solving are useful for learners in all the subjects, but especially history and social studies where values clarification, multiple points of view, skills of respectful debate and consensus-building, and critical analysis of sources play a central role in the development of a skillful future democratic citizen (Cude, 2012; Hess, 2008; Parker, 2008; Republic of Kenya, 2017; Teise & le Roux, 2016; Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017).

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In the new learner-centered approach, the learners take charge of their own education. They are assisted by their teachers to make sense of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gathered and to construct their own knowledge, as the constructivism model proposes (Taber, 2011; UNESCO, 2008; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). The learners' voices are heard as the classroom is filled with collaboration, creativity, and communication. Teachers act as facilitators who provide appropriate activities and support pupils' learning, rather than being the disseminators of knowledge, pouring knowledge into the learners' heads, only to be emptied out during examination time. In the new competency-based curriculum model, teachers take more time to prepare their lessons before classes, even developing teaching-learning resources that engage learners in activities. Despite the richness of this competency-based curriculum, teachers in Kenya feel ill-prepared to implement it, especially having taught and been immersed in the traditional "transmission approach" to teaching (Tang, Lee, & Chun, 2012). Weeklong government-sponsored training modules have proved insufficient to promote a full change in behaviors. It appears that the major challenge in Kenya's education, beyond resources and curriculum, is teacher education and training. Within this context, the researchers of this study sought to address the problem of teacher preparation for learner-centered curriculum implementation by identifying and documenting the impact of one preservice methodology class in a university in Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

According to the current literature, there is a need for more research on specific interventions which aim to change the future teachers' beliefs and transform their future classrooms (Tang, Lee, & Chun, 2012; Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017; Westbrook et al., 2013). Additionally, scholars (e.g., Buckler, 2011) call for more research in the "remote rural schools, with large classes and the uncertainties of teacher and student presence" (Westbrook et al., 2013, p. 4), which is the rural context of this research study. Within this context, the researchers attempt to answer the following research questions: **How can one class on transformative teacher education make a difference in training future teachers?** What can be learned from the case of this class taught at a Kenyan university in September-December, 2017?

Methods

Theoretical Framework: Constructivism

The research is grounded upon the authors' underlying belief in the broad definition of constructivism, which University of Cambridge professor K.S. Taber calls "optimally guided

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instruction” built upon prior knowledge, and best accomplished through social interaction, active learning, and “authentic” tasks related to the students’ lives (Taber, 2011). One of the leading constructivists, Von Glasersfeld, explained that “knowledge is not passively received but built up by the cognizing subject” (Von Glasersfeld, 1995, as quoted in Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). In other words, students are ideally constructing their own knowledge rather than being inactive receptors in the process. This defies the current reliance on largely lecture-based methodologies, yet the teacher is still intimately involved in guiding the process (Bodner, 1986; Booyse & Chetty, 2016; Westbrook et al., 2013). Recent research warns about over-reliance on pure constructivist models; here we are envisioning the big picture ideal contrasting to a didactic, authoritarian view of education (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006; Krahenbuhl, 2016).

In teacher education, the same applies. Preservice teachers deserve to be taught in the manner they will be asked to teach; therefore, they ought to be involved in the creation of their own knowledge and understanding of the art and science of teaching, hence the highly interactive and inquiry-based nature of the methods course being studied. A community of learners, including the professor, embarks on a journey of discovery (Berg & Shaw, 2014; Noddings, 2004). This journey is intended to be carried all the way into their own future classrooms.

The significance of the pedagogical approach of critical thinking and engaging learners supports a broader pan-African initiative toward greater democratization and citizenship education (Hardman, Ackers, Abrishamian, & O’Sullivan, 2011; Namphande, Clarke, Farren, & McCully, 2017; Republic of Kenya, 2017; Westbrook et al., 2013). Paulo Friere’s work (1970) is referenced frequently in teacher education in Kenya by those favoring a “problem-posing education” with respectful but critical conversations addressing social problems (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Hess, 2008). In this study, we have used the terms *learner-centered* and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) due to their contextual familiarity in Kenyan education; however, by *learner-centered* and ESD, we mean these many qualities implicit in a broad definition of constructivist theory.

Context of the Study

This research grew organically out of a collaboration between two like-minded professors: one a local lecturer/professor with a passion for cutting-edge methodology, and the other an American teacher-educator/professor with a passion for education as transformation. The American was a Fulbright scholar posted to this university for a year of research, teaching, and international partnership-building. Her local colleague generously agreed to collaborate on this research that

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coincided with her interests in learner-centered teaching methods. Their shared passion of envisioning a brighter future for teacher training in Kenya persuaded them to collaborate in research projects like this to bring the potential into practice. [See Cornbleth's introduction to *An Invitation to Research in Social Education* (1986) for more on how passion fuels research.]

The Fulbright professor taught the *Special Methods of Teaching History and Government* (CIM 312) class over the course of the fall semester (September to December) of 2017. This class fluctuated from 16 to 27 students, all third-year university students within an age range of 20-28 years old, the majority aged 22-25 years. These students were studying to become secondary teachers in two fields, one of which was history. The course examined the pedagogical approaches and methods appropriate for future secondary-level history and government teachers. The university, a relatively young institution but with a rich history of prior teacher training, is located several hours outside of Nairobi in a rural area of Kenya dominated mainly by the Maasai community, who are proud of their pastoralist culture, keeping herds of sheep, goats, and cows.

The *Special Methods of Teaching History and Government* course was based upon a merging of two models of pedagogical training—the current curricular model at the university melded with the aims and objectives of the social studies teacher educator from the United States. Together, it was hoped, the goals would both meet the needs of the students' training in the university broader curriculum as well as expand their exposure and experience with active teaching methodology (a specific aim of the Fulbright Grant). Therefore, new objectives were added to the standard course, such as (emphasis added):

- Students will know/understand (cognitive): the importance of teaching thinking skills, including **critical thinking, problem solving, and conflict resolution**, enabling their students to become **independent thinkers and compassionate citizens** of the 21st century . . .
- Students will be able to (skills): develop strategies for effective, engaging social studies instruction, including presentation skills and the use of a variety of instructional methodologies to ensure high quality, engaging, **transformational instruction**.
- Students will value: the use of social studies as a tool for **social justice**.

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The course was taught by the professor two days a week throughout the semester. As was explained to the students in the opening session, the methods of teaching this course were intended as a model for how they should teach (Adler, 2008; Westbrook, Durrani, Brown, Orr, Pryor, Boddy, & Salvi, 2013). In other words, there was minimal lecture, maximum group and whole class discussion, frequent inquiry-based activities that could be adapted to use in their own classrooms, hands-on experiences, discussion of controversial issues, a guest speaker, a field trip, and class presentations. Throughout the semester, students participated actively, though they were skeptical at first. They also created their own textbooks illustrating the methods of teaching history and government (or other subjects) in learner-centered ways.

Research Methods

Due to the nature of the study (short-term, focused on one particular class), a qualitative case study approach seemed the best way to capture the essence of this phenomenon (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). Qualitative research effectively uncovers the layers and nuances of lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Marimba, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Case study approach is useful when we are asking “how” and “why” questions and examining the context of the real-life phenomenon “up close and personal” (Yin, 2009). This personal involvement of the researcher with the researched is also described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a naturalistic paradigm where the researcher is a natural part of the study, living out an interaction between the “knower and the known” which perfectly describes this research study.

Data Collection. As the professor of the class being studied, the first author-researcher was a participant observer, while the second author conducted the focus group interviews in order to allow the students to speak freely without concern for the relationship established with their professor. Such interviews were conducted after the final exams were marked and recorded. Students gave informed consent to participate and willingly came to a focus group interview. The second author additionally assisted throughout by interpreting the cultural context and current educational milieu for the American first author.

Research to assess the outcomes of the preservice social studies methods class was conducted over the course of one semester, at which points the pre-and the post-assessments were given. Data from these two bookended assessments documented the impact of the class in changing perceptions, skills, and knowledge. Pre-assessments were given in the first week of the class to set a baseline for demonstrating growth. The pre-assessment questions were matched to similar

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questions on the final exam for comparison. Results were matched to individuals in order to chart the changes in perceptions, skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Additional data took the form of course assessments and field notes, as well as focus group interviews. These interviews were conducted by the second author, who had no previous interaction with the students and no former or future relationship.

Data Analysis. The notes from the interviews were triangulated to demonstrate a high consistency in tone, language, and reported statements. Pre-assessments, final exam, and course assignments were coded with common themes such as professionalism, history content knowledge, self-confidence as a teacher, and the various values expressed such as honesty and ethics. These themes were then grouped to arrive at the conclusions from the data itself.

What follows below are the findings from this data interpretation that illuminate the outcomes for this one interactive history methods course taught in Kenya. These findings are not transferable in that they represent a single case in one complex context; however, the authors hope that these findings may inspire further research and application in other contexts to add to the field of research, as well as inform practice in the training of future teachers in Kenya and elsewhere.

Findings & Discussion

Three outcomes emerged in the analysis once the data was coded and compared. Changes occurred in the three areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes:

1. Knowledge of new approach to teaching.
2. Skill level of teaching and thinking skills.
3. Attitudes and values expressed.

Each of these will be considered in turn, with relevant quotations from the participants to illustrate the changes.

1. Knowledge of new approach to teaching

Increased familiarity with learner-centered teaching. According to the interviews (which were held two months after the course concluded), students retained knowledge about the learner-centered approach to teaching. When asked to describe what a learner-centered classroom

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would look like, how it would be different from a traditional one, their descriptions included most of the primary attributes of learner-centered education:

- There will be interaction between the teacher and the learner.
- The teacher will just be a facilitator....
- Learners' ability will be identified easily.
- Learners will be exchanging ideas more.
- Slow learners will be able to learn from the fast learners. (interview, 2 Feb 2018)

The focus on the interaction among students and between the teacher and the students in the methods classroom represents the most important difference, as cited by the interviewees. This was one of the attributes of the methods class that students appreciated the most, calling it "lively;" "I liked the [class] because... time was given to us to interact with different objectives [perspectives] from the members;" "What I liked mostly in class is how Professor grouped us in groups [so we could] have discussions." Others stated: "I like the way you interacted with us in class;" "What I liked most is... I can get involved in the class discussions."

Additionally, most students concluded that learner-centered teaching would be "better," an "improvement" over the current style of learning in both schools of education and secondary schools. They expressed appreciation for the way "learners solved problems by themselves" as opposed to the more traditional directive approach. One misconception was expressed, stating that the "teacher will have less work since students will be involved." While not an accurate reflection of the size of the workload, it does point out the shared leadership of the classroom, as the teacher is no longer the only source of information, seemingly a relief to that future teacher.

Knowledge of variety of actual teaching methods. One of the chief intended outcomes for a methods class is the familiarity with multiple pedagogical methods of engagement which create meaning and allow students to develop life skills (Adler, 2008; Price and Nelson, 2007). Students felt that the course was influential in teaching them the methods of student-centered teaching. They reflected on the evaluation at the end of the course: "At the end of the semester, I was more educated by the lecturer's teaching method;" "What I liked most is the way you imparted special method[s] of teaching history. They will help me most in my future." Referring to the course instructor as "lecturer" is the terminology used and represents well the type of pedagogy

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employed most commonly by university instructors. Recognizing and appreciating the difference in this particular course signifies a changing mindset.

In order to assess their initial exposure to multiple methods of active teaching and learning, the pre-assessment asked: "How does a teacher engage the students in a lesson?" Given that there were 16 pre-assessments completed, only four students (25%) reported intended means of engaging students in class through the use of "discussions," "group work," or "experiments." All others reported that the means of engaging students in the lesson is limited to the traditional question-and-answer format of lectures. Some also included less appropriate means such as giving tests (3 responses-19%), homework (3 responses-19%), or telling jokes (1 response-6%). However, two students included getting to know your students as one way to engage them in the lesson, which is on par with learner-centered objectives.

So, in analyzing the pre-assessment, it appears that some members of the class had an initial impression of the need to move from a solely lecture-driven model of education. This could have been influenced by the course syllabus overview, which stressed such a potential objective, or it could be a knowledge gained from prior courses or their own reading. Building upon this foundation, though, the methods course introduced no fewer than 19 specific methods to create a learner-centered history class. While no students demonstrated a full mastery of the full array of methods, data from the final exam included a far greater diversity of strategies and a deeper understanding of the need to engage the learners.

On the post-assessment, no question directly asked the students to recall the methods, but throughout the exam, they were asked to give examples from class. These were cataloged and tallied to determine which specific strategies were retained and discussed. Certain ones were mentioned by many students repeatedly as having been impactful in their development as an effective teacher. The following were named/described among the 18 post-assessments:

Table 1. *Results from post-assessment.*

Course Component/experience	Number of times cited by students as impactful
Field trip (to Nasaruni Academy for Maasai Girls, a local primary school)	5

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Microteaching/student presentations (in class)	4
Bloom's taxonomy (levels of thinking)	3
Demonstration (guests came to demonstrate organization/planning)	1
Hands-on Simulation (trash experiment/ archeology activity)	1
Use of essential questions to guide instruction	1

In comparing the data from the pre-assessment to the data on the post-assessment, there is gain in the number and description of strategies reported, as well as the self-reported growth in their teaching ability, described in the next section. If we consider that teaching involves a set of skills that must be learned and mastered as a student teacher, then this outcome is central to the goal of creating learner-centered educators who can teach for transformation.

2. Skill level increased

Teaching skills. No comparative data is available tracking improvement in their actual teaching skill; therefore, reliance on their self-reported levels of competence and confidence are necessary. Future research could follow up the student teachers to trace the longevity of the effect. Considering that before this class they had never had the opportunity to teach, the microteaching to their peers in class and the authentic teaching experience at Nasaruni Academy on the service learning trip represented areas for potential growth. These two occasions were most frequently cited as instrumental in gaining skills (see Table 1). One student elaborated on the effect of the class presentation (microteaching) on his own growth in teaching skills: "The class presentation during class session also helped us in teaching and learning. It enabled us to have courage, [dress] smart, to maintain eye contact when addressing the learners." Another elaborated further:

This lesson has made me to improve in learning and teaching. I was just fearful at first, I could not be able to stand before my fellow students and lecture to them. But through this course, I was able to lecture and every student appreciated my lecture because they

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were able to understand what I taught. This course has promoted me especially in language speaking and being confident in microteaching lesson. It has equipped me with different and special skills like remembering, understanding, creativity and others. At first it seemed to be hard, but as the time goes by I gained confidence through the teacher. When I went to field trip, I was able to teach and ask questions to my students and able to interact with my students or learners in an orderly way. Therefore, teaching and learning has actually changed my life... (post-assessment response, December, 2017)

Self-reflection skills. Written responses also illuminate the development in thinking skills over the course of the semester, specifically self-reflection. Field notes confirm that the skill of reflection was unfamiliar to students at the onset of the course. Yet, teacher educators agree that being a reflective practitioner is a significant means of continual growth and impact of a teacher to bring change (Adler, 2008; Marzano, 2006, 2009; Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017). Hence, one of the objectives for the course was for students to know their “roles as reflective decision-makers.” Considering language issues and a cultural norm that does not necessarily encourage self-reflective thinking, there was a palpable nervousness and an uneasy laughter whenever the topic initially arose. Over the course of the semester, however, this diminished, and students slowly began to welcome the idea of thinking about their own learning process as well as vocalizing their emotional responses to topics and experiences in class.

Self-reported growth also demonstrates an increased level of self-reflection. This was highly emphasized during the semester with two written assignments specifically targeted at improving skills of introspection and self-reflection. One student mentioned the act of reflective writing as a change agent for him in the course: “The writing of the reflection after the microteaching at Nasaruni also changed [me].” Several students acted upon their self-reflective realization by revising those assignments when their superficial reflections yielded lower marks than they desired.

Critical Thinking Skills. Beyond self-reflection, other specific thinking skills mentioned in the final assessment include critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills in social studies were emphasized. Field notes demonstrated that students grasped the importance of this set of democratic skills in light of training future citizens to be problem-solvers in Kenya,. One student appreciated his/her own application of the skills: “In the Bloom’s taxonomy I achieved a lot. The levels of thinking helped me to tackle difficult situations and solve them effectively.” Another commented that he/she developed a “critical mind,” while another respondent indicated new skills practiced and

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developed in this area: “She (the professor) has helped me think critically in answering questions during and after class.”

Still, thinking skills was one area which yielded some misconceptions reflected on the post-assessment. Some students missed certain classes, and this could account for such gross discrepancies in understanding. One student reported that “The learners should be taught memorization. This is effectively done through repetition of some words. This will improve the thinking skills of learners.” Another included this misconceived idea: “How should a history teacher teach thinking skills? By giving the learners a speed test which they will be required to answer very fast.” Being a post-assessment, there was no opportunity to address these misconceptions; one hopes that they will be corrected in the future coursework at the university.

4. Values and attitudinal changes

Improved attitude toward their profession. Initially, in the pre-assessment, the students responded to the prompt asking them why they wanted to be history/government teachers with predominantly disengaged comments such as “it’s an interesting subject” and “to study the past.” Three students reported only that this was their “career subject,” and 10 students noted that they will benefit from knowing their country’s past. Only one student acknowledged any greater purpose or application to life: “To equip students with knowledge and skills for future lives.”

Contrasting the dispassionate answers at the beginning of the course with those from the final exam, one notes the gain in perception of the nobility of their career choice, the professionalism of the job of teacher, and an increased passion for the greater purposes of teaching beyond the classroom. In the words of one student, “The course has changed me from an ordinary person to a professional teacher.” The student went on to explain further the dimensions of professionalism, including the hard work of planning and impacting the students’ “daily lives” beyond simply academics. Another student captured this growth in her response on the final exam:

I have learnt that my work as a teacher is to impart skills and knowledge to the learners and not dumping facts into their heads as I thought before. Before this course I have been think[ing] that the purpose of a teacher is to get a job and earn money, but through learning this course, I came to understand that teaching is a long life learning process and therefore my duty as a teacher is not to get a job or earn money but to help learners acquire skills and help them to achieve their goals in life.

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Her initial response from the pre-assessment highlights the depth of her change: “I want to teach history and government because it is an interesting subject that makes me to understand more about the past and it is also my career subject.” Seen in contrast to the later comment from her final exam (above), the change in her perception of teaching is significant. Another student echoed a similar change in perception of the job of teaching:

I always thought that teaching students in a secondary school is as easy as possible. It was just after I started taking this course that I realized teaching is all about sacrifice. I just know ... that I have got a long journey to go through. I realized the life of a student in on my hands as a teacher. Therefore, I should do anything possible to make that student I teach successful.

This student gained a new perspective of the importance of the job of a teacher, which can only make her teaching more sincere, more invested, and more impactful. Altogether, eight students specifically noted changes in their view of the role of a professional educator, with two naming the nobility of the profession and two others claiming the empowering impact this change of view has on their own outlook.

Teacher agency and self-efficacy. Teachers need agency to effect change. This is a crucial component of transformative teaching (Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). As Stenhouse stated, “Classrooms cannot be bettered except through the agency of teachers: teachers must be the critics of work in curriculum, not docile agents.” (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 75, as quoted in Chadwick, 2017). Self-efficacy is the personal quality that allows them to experience the agency that empowers a teacher. This is necessary if they are to impact learning, engage students effectively, and work to bring transformation where they teach. According to Fitchett, Starker, and Salyers (2012), “Within the field of teaching, desire to engage students, instructional practice, and willingness to work in challenging environments are outcomes of teacher self-efficacy” (Fitchett et al., 2012). One student summed up his growth in self-efficacy thusly: “The course has helped to change me in decision making. Through this course I have known how to make decisions in my class... because before, other people were the one who made decisions for me.” If future teachers can begin to see their career as noble and valuable, this will empower them to become change-agents.

Attitudes toward new ideas in education. Professional growth was also evidenced in changing attitudes toward the new approach to teaching: learner-centered teaching. Attitudes were changed to the point that some students became advocates for the wider dispersal of the learner-

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centered method, claiming, “We need to suggest that the methods can be used country-wide.” Another said it needed to be taught to other content areas because “it’s the best.” What contributed to their changed minds? When asked this, they responded with these ideas: greater “understanding,” “[it] became interesting and good,” and “we adapted to it.” This process of learning the benefits, though, took apparently nearly the full semester, as comments included “at the end it became good,” “became interesting and good,” “We developed a positive attitude; we became adapted to it.” All suggest a process over time which gradually made the method more approachable and comprehensible.

Discussions in the interview session revealed a real original hesitancy to believe in the new ideas. This was described as “nervous” or “at the beginning there was anxiety, but it disappeared at the end.” Yet another said, “I thought it won’t work, but at end it was the best.” Still, even as they came to embrace or “adapt to it,” they still recognize that it goes against the grain of current practice. Thus, some worried that it may not be a successful reform due to lack of teacher training. “Lecturers have not been taught effectively,” he reasoned, “but I believe it can work after several years.” Students, even when convinced of the value of this type of pedagogy, remain skeptical of the impact due to the lack of widespread acceptance and support. They see themselves as having had a unique but limited exposure due to the obscurity of the practice. However, they did suggest that more students be exposed to the “truth” as they were, thus spreading the movement.

Values as a vital part of social studies/history teaching. A content analysis of the post-assessment yielded the following results, values which they mention as having learned in the course either directly or indirectly:

Table 2. *Values learned.*

Values of the Self:	
Honesty	6
Self-reliance, self-confidence, dignity	6
Hard work, perseverance, responsibility, self-motivation	5
Moral life, avoid corruption	9

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Understand themselves, self-knowledge	2
Values of Interaction with Others:	
Tolerance, cooperation, equality	8
Love, sharing, generosity, helping	6
Leadership	2
Values of Community/State:	
Patriotism	5
Freedom, equality	3
Active citizens, help community	6
Problem-solvers, change-makers	4
Conserve environment	4
Compliance, following rules, obedience	7

While the pre-assessment did not specifically ask about any values in teaching, the presence of values in the students' responses in the post-assessment clearly indicates their understanding that values are a vital part of the learning environment and process of training future global citizens. In the methods course lesson plan format, they had to identify the values being taught and why in the lesson they proposed. At first this proved quite perplexing, but very quickly the students embraced the idea, interestingly more willingly and enthusiastically than students in the United States when the researcher teaches this part of the lesson plan format. The inclusion of values as an integral part of their teaching was an entirely new concept for these future teachers and one that further highlights the impact that one methods course can make.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

Thus, overall, the students grew in their knowledge of learner-centered methodology, their skills of teaching and reflection, and their attitudes about their career and coming changes on the national educational horizon. Two conclusions can be drawn from this case study that might

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inform future iterations. First, *change can occur through one single course*. The one semester course does seem to create an impetus for change and a means to do it. However, it is also clear that the revolutionary nature of this change of teaching style would benefit from multiple exposures in multiple contexts in order to increase the sustainability of the change. Second, students will come away with *some attitudinal shifts which lay the groundwork for the change in practice*. These foundational attitudinal shifts were unexpected and contextual, yet important. Changing their perceptions of their career was not a stated intention of the course, yet raising their sense of the nobility of the career raises their investment and dedication to the field. It may also increase their tenure as teachers. As one student reported, in their eyes, this might have been the most significant impact: “My teaching and learning has been changed by this course. ... She has made a great impact in me *more so in the philosophy of thinking*” (emphasis added).

Implications for future research and practice

Implications for practice include that more emphasis needs to be placed upon building a network, developing a support system, and a vision that is more broadly supported than just one methods class. Even the students themselves pointed out in their final exams that more emphasis is needed on embedding the revolutionary change to a learner-centered, ESD model of teaching into the whole teacher training curriculum more visibly, more intentionally, and more comprehensibly. More exposure will give them the confidence to teach in this manner.

Length of time is a considerable factor in adopting change, as it is based in the personal relationship and trust-building. The class took the entire semester to become comfortable enough to adopt and adapt to the new ways. In the future, it may be wise to have the instructor for methods continue with the students into some teaching practice placements, in order to keep emphasizing the value and need for the new approach to teaching. Pressure to succumb to the status quo is always intense in the field of teaching.

Future Research

While the interviews demonstrated that the new knowledge and attitudes lasted at least two months past the post-assessment, changes to practice will occur thereafter, and require further research to document. Future research should follow the student teachers into their placements and beginning teaching jobs to see if they are able to retain a commitment to the new methodologies, the skills of student-centered teaching, and a positive attitude toward their profession. Further research should consider: What is the longevity of the impact? Where in the curriculum and teacher training can further experiences with active learning strategies be

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integrated? On a systemic level, how can the curriculum of teacher training institutes and universities embrace a more progressive approach toward supporting this type of training?

In conclusion, this case study sought to answer the research question: Can one class on transformative teacher education make a difference in training future teachers? What can be learned from this one case? In answer, this study demonstrates that one methods course might indeed be able to spark some changes, if not ignite a full fire. Time will tell if those sparks grow and warm the next generation.

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About the Authors:

Michelle Dawn Cude is Professor at James Madison University, Department of Middle, Secondary, and Math Education. Her research interests include: globalizing our future teachers, social justice, girls education internationally, service learning, and teacher education.

Florence Kisirkoi is Sr. Lecturer at Maasai Mara University, School of Education, Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Education Management. Her areas of expertise are: teacher education, curriculum, values-based education, and learner-centered education.

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