Transforming Educators in the United States and South Africa: An International Collaboration to Enhance Culturally Responsive Inclusive Practices

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Abstract

This qualitative exploratory case study addresses constructs of educational inequity on a global scale through an iterative analysis of the cultural experiences of 61educators from South Africa and the United States. The project provided an online and in-person network for educators to discuss cross-cultural challenges, educational system assets, and inclusive strategies for supporting culturally and linguistically diverse learners. A shared professional development process, designed from an adapted Changemaking process, increased the knowledge, understanding, and application of innovative, culturally responsive inclusive practices of new teachers while also serving as an opportunity for veteran teachers to receive additional teacher training. Educators exchanged ideas on increasing positive classroom management, motivating learners using empathy, collaborating effectively, linking learning and postsecondary transition experiences, and improving partnership with families. This global and cultural exchange exposed them to unique and diverse educational perspectives, a critical aspect in supporting all learners within the K-12 educational system. Results of this project indicate that using the adapted Changemaking process increased educators' awareness of culturally responsive inclusive practices, allowed participants to make comparisons between global contexts, developed empathy, and inspired collaborative engagement and leadership within their individual educational settings.

Keywords: changemaking, global education, collaboration, transformative educators, culturally responsive inclusive practices, teacher training, professional development

Educators across the globe struggle to support learners experiencing challenges related to language, socioeconomic circumstances, and other contextual factors. The current study compared the educational systems in South Africa (S.A.) and the United States (U.S.). The study aimed to transform educators in both countries through collabora-tion and the development of culturally responsive inclusive practices. Initially, this global collaboration provided opportunities for educators from both countries to frame key elements affecting their teaching. Next, educators convened to plan projects using high-leverage culturally responsive inclusive practices. Finally, educators were

tasked with sharing and implementing collaboratively designed culturally responsive inclusive practices within their local settings.

Based on Banks' (1994) transformation approach, educators learned about each country's diversity, achievement, and supports. Diversity encompasses constructs such as race, class, gender, religion, language, exceptionality, and global dimensions. For the purpose of this study, we focused on diversity within schools as noted by racial/ethnic identification, socioeconomic indicators, language, and exceptionalities (i.e., differing abilities). The next section briefly outlines briefly constructs of diversity in S.A. and the U.S.

Constructs of Diversity in South Africa and the United States

The apartheid system in South Africa (1948-1994) had an institutionalized system of discrimination, separation, and inequality based on race. Badat and Sayed (2014) argued that the post-apartheid education system continues to have historic and structural inequities. Based on the four major racial/ethnic group categories in South Africa, school children in Grades R-12 identified as 81% Black African, 9% Coloured, 8% White, and 2% Indian/Asian. Sixty-nine percent of children are beneficiaries of social grants and a disproportionate number of Black and Coloured children report hunger as compared to Indian/Asian and White peers (Marginalized Groups Indicator Report, 2018). Furthermore, privileged schools (i.e., Model C or private) charge fees and receive government funding (Engelbrecht et al., 2016) versus township and rural schools where families struggle to pay fees.

Meanwhile in the U.S., the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2019) reported learners enrolled in public schools identified as 48% White, 27% Hispanic/LatinX, 15% Black, 5% Asian, 4% two or more races, 1% Native American/Indian, and less than 1% Pacific Islanders, which indicates that the majority are students of color. Currently, nearly one quarter of American children live in poverty, experience food scarcity, lack access to healthcare, and experience additional stress due to violence and drug abuse (Darling-Hammond, 2015; NCES, 2020).

Another factor impacting both countries is the diversity of languages. S.A. honors 11 official languages, encourages additive multilingualism, and requires documents to be written in at least two languages. However, the most common translations continue to be English and Afrikaans, leaving the nine indigenous languages without representation (Makalela, 2015). In the U.S. there is no official language, yet 10% of learners are identified as emerging bilinguals (NCES, 2017), with higher numbers in lower grades and urban areas. Education policies in both countries challenge monolingualism and promote multi-lingual education (Makalela, 2015; Ricento, 2000) through strategies such as translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2015) and sheltered instruction (Sicola et al., 2018).

Learners with disabilities (LWD) face challenges in both countries. S.A. has taken a progressive approach, whereas, the U.S. has been litigious (Jez & Luneta, 2018). S.A.'s White Paper #6 (2001) identified teacher training on inclusive practices, infrastructure changes, and additional supports; yet, none of this has happened (Kiru & Cooc, 2018; Jez & Luneta, 2018; Ntombela, 2011; Walton, 2017). In the U.S., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates LWD receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment. Research (e.g., Kurth & Forber-Pratt, 2017; McLeskey et al., 2017) found that although there is a push for more inclusive classrooms, teachers in segregated classrooms often focused on deficits and barriers. To this end, state/province and local education agencies in S.A. and U.S. have worked with teacher education organizations to provide professional development (PD) for preservice and in-service educators (Creighton Martin & Hauth, 2015; Jez & Luneta, 2018). Educators in both countries would benefit from additional training (Kiru & Cooc, 2018; Walton, 2017) and support on culturally responsive inclusive practices (Jez & Luneta, 2018).

S.A. has a complicated educational past with changes to their postapartheid political system. Naiker (2014) shared that the intricacies of changes related to inclusive practices to support all learners have been difficult, most notably with those who are Black and poor. Disparity of resources, high dropout rates, gaps in educator training, and limited educational experience of parents are implicated in the low performance in both literacy and numeracy for this population, despite the recent increased funding of S.A. education. Similarly, the U.S. opportunity gap (Carter & Welner, 2013) has also been persistent since the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Baker et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Reardon, 2011). A disproportionate number of African American and Hispanic/Latin learners received special education services and were enrolled in segregated classrooms (Artiles et al., 2010), making them vulnerable to the school to prison pipeline (Gonzalez, 2012).

Culturally Responsive Inclusive Practices

Ladson-Billings (2014) demonstrated that effective pedagogy for teachers is connected to learners' academic success. Additionally, research (Corcoran, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Hunzicker, 2011; Jez & Luneta, 2018; Wei et al., 2009) indicated Professional Development (PD) for teachers should be "sustained, intensive, collaborative, experiential," (Jez & Luneta, 2018, p. 24) and culturally responsive to its audience. However, PD in both countries

has often occurred through single workshops without support after the PD (Jez & Luneta, 2018; Wei et al., 2009).

Designed to create professional networks of educators who met online over multiple months and then in person as they developed culturally responsive inclusive practices, this study addressed the inequities within the two education systems through the following practices: asset-based approaches (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Morrison, 2017), strength-based approaches (Anderson, 2005; Lopez-Lewis, 2009; McCashen, 2005), high leverage practices (HLP; McLeskey et al., 2017), and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014). The strengths-based approach to teaching and learning (Lopez & Lewis, 2009) promotes agency to change through the understanding and identification of a person's strengths, capacities, and values while also enhancing self-determination skills, empowerment, and shared power (McCashen, 2005). It "involves educators intentionally and systematically discovering their own talents and developing and applying strengths...to improve their teaching methods, to design and implement their curriculum, and to establish programmatic activities" (Anderson, 2005, p.1). This strategy empowers educators to discover their own strengths, develop new teaching skills, and demonstrate excellence in learning.

Educators can use strengths and assets to create caring and respectful environments that embrace all learners (Anderson, 2005). Morrison (2017) studied the effects of asset-based pedagogy on first-generation learners who were often disadvantaged in traditional classrooms. Their research found that asset-based approaches recognizing learners' culture, race, experience, and gender enhanced learning. Jez and Luneta (2018) modeled this approach and used assets of the school community to curate PD opportunities for educators in South African schools. The current study builds on strengths that educators identified within themselves and their school community to increase culturally responsive inclusive practices.

After identifying strengths and needs within a school community, training in culturally responsive inclusive pedagogy is beneficial. McLeskey et al. (2017) provided guidelines for HLP that educators can use to improve learners' outcomes through assessment, collaboration, instruction, and social, emotional, and behavior supports. For the purpose of this study, HLP instructional practices presented to educators included collaborating with others, creating a safe environment, making short- and long-term learning goals, developing systematic instruction, and implementing explicit instruction with scaffolds. Teachers were also encouraged to increase learner engagement with flexible grouping, assistive technologies, and feedback to learners.

Theoretical Frameworks

AshokaU (2008) institutions are committed to creating change beginning in higher education and spreading globally using the Changemaking framework (Alden Rivers et al., 2015; Curtis, 2013; Drayton, 2006). The current project adapted the Changemaker process of framing, convening, and igniting by integrating experiences that connect to theoretical frameworks from educational research, specifically, ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), to lay the foundation for examining the transformative approach to the teaching of inclusive practices through a culturally responsive lens (Banks, 1994; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) integral social environments (i.e., microsystems, exosystems, chronosystems) are critical in the development of what is learned and how a person interacts within these different levels of influences. The current study allowed for an integral look into the structures and relationships at various levels (self, learners, classroom, school, district, policy) that influenced the participants and guided their Changemaking topics and collaborative efforts. To examine how multiple identities (race, gender, language, ability, etc.) impact an individual's experience within a system of power and oppression, Crenshaw's intersectionality framework (1989) was used. Thus, through these theoretical frameworks, educators situated their understanding of teaching and learning within the system of government/public education that serves diverse learners. Finally, Gay's (2010) CRT perspective was used to examine cultural differences as assets, enhance care within academic communities, and guide the development of curriculum, school climate, instruction, and teacher-student relationships.

The purpose of this study was to explore how educators in the U.S. and S.A. were able to negotiate and reflect on new knowledge using culturally responsive inclusive practices to support diverse learners following a global Changemaking experience. The following research questions were posed: 1) To what extent can using the Changemaking project increase preservice educators' and veteran teachers' knowledge of culturally responsive inclusive practices?; 2) To what extent can using the Changemaking project empower preservice and veteran teachers in effective collaboration?; and 3) To what extent does the reflection of the Changemaking project demonstrate empathy and commitment to the implementation of culturally responsive inclusive practices with sustainability in mind?

METHODOLOGY

Using convenience and snowball sampling techniques, faculty from two universities in the U.S. and faculty from S.A. recruited undergraduates, graduates, and alumni from

their respective universities and local educators from township schools in S.A. to participate in a voluntary Changemaker project from March to June, 2018. The two faculty members from the U.S. facilitated email communication over the course of the project. Institutional Review Board and ethics permission from the S.A. provinces were obtained. All participants consented to their involvement in the study. One additional researcher from the U.S. collaborated with university faculty and principals in S.A. to organize the Changemaking events.

Participants and Locations

Sixty-one educators from S.A. and the U.S. participated in a Changemaking project to address barriers to learning using an asset-based approach across the continents. The study examined how the group experienced the Changemaking process. Ten preservice teachers working on their teaching credential and masters from a private university in California and ten preservice teachers from a private university in Virginia (four males and 16 females) enrolled in the global experience three-unit course. Twelve masters level educators from a private university in Johannesburg (teaching in rural schools in the Limpopo Province) and 29 educators from a large township in Johannesburg, Soweto (14 females and 27 males) signed up voluntarily after hearing about the opportunity from the university selected township principals. Five heterogeneous groups were formed, each group consisting of educators from each country. These randomly assigned Changemaking groups ranged from ten to twelve participants. The educators worked in a range of grade levels (Grade R/Kindergarten to Grade 12) and content areas serving culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse learners.

Changemaker Project

The four-month international collaborative process began with asynchronous email conversations (Mann, 2000; Meho, 2006; Selwyn & Robson, 1998) and culminated in a Changemaking Symposium in Johannesburg where educators presented projects on culturally responsive inclusive practices. This section is organized by the adapted Changemaker process terms–framing, convening, and igniting.

Framing. For the purpose of this study, researchers used asynchronous email to collect data during the framing stage. Ratislavova and Ratislav (2014) describe the asynchronous email data collection process as a "method where information is repeatedly exchanged online between researcher and participant within a particular time frame" (p. 452). Participants in different time zones with varied access to technology prevented synchronous communication prior to arrival in S.A. As a result, email data collection was an economical strategy for attending to the geographical distance. The quality of the data obtained during asynchronous email collection is considered nearly equal to that of face-to-face interviews; often the nature of the response is more rich, structured, and explicit than face-to-face interviews. Asynchronous email methodology provided two additional benefits. Researchers wanted to use their limited time judiciously, and they wanted to build relationships between the participants before bringing them together. Finally, the transcription process is nearly eliminated (Ratislavova & Ratislav, 2014).

Participants who signed up for the study abroad courses (U.S.) and indicated interest in participating in the experience (S.A.) received an email with an IRB consent form and an introduction to the Changemaking process. Next, participants were randomly placed into five groups that included members from California, Virginia, Johannesburg, and Limpopo. The next email outlined the five email exchanges to be completed prior to the in-person collaboration. From the onset, participants took between two and three weeks to respond to each email. Researchers did not ask probing follow-up questions; however, they encouraged participants to clarify information and answer questions and were reminded they could respond to past email prompts. All email responses were collected in one Excel sheet which was shared with all participants (i.e., member check).

During the framing phase, educators learned about each other's country through readings which compared policies and practices used to support all learners, such as S.A.'s White Paper #6 (2001) and the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004). Furthermore, they examined the impact of racial segregation practices in both countries from the lenses of apartheid and Jim Crow laws. The asynchronous email exchanges (Mann, 2000; Meho, 2006; Selwyn & Robson, 1998; Ratislavova & Ratislav, 2014) are described next.

The purpose of the first two emails was to encourage participants' openness to developing relationships through identifying commonalities. These emails asked educators to introduce themselves, identify what they hoped to get out of the project, and to share what inspired them to become a teacher. The researchers modeled this process by providing information about themselves to demonstrate mutual respect and openness (Ratislavova & Ratislav, 2014). Email three focused on building a common language by defining local terms and further discussing ideologies. For example, using terms such as *Coloured* which can be seen as offensive in the U.S. versus *Multiracial*, *Grade R* (Reception Year) vs. *Kindergarten,* and defining terms such as *culturally responsive inclusive practices*. Then, in email four, participants identified strengths and barriers to learning. Email five asked each participant to describe ways they personally supported learners with differing experiences, abilities, languages, medical histories, traumas, and socioeconomic circumstances through the lens of CRT (Gay, 2010). Within the email exchanges, preservice

teachers networked, and veteran educators provided context from their years of experience in the field. As a way to build relationships, empathy, and set the tone for the convening phase, educators from both countries toured the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. U.S. students shared their American perspectives of slavery, Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline with South African educators.

Convening. On Day 2, Changemakers met at a partner school in the township of Soweto to design their group's project based on the assets of their communities that could be easily adapted for regional classrooms. The goal of the project was to build empathy for learners, address one identified educational need, and integrate a culturally responsive inclusive practices. After a brief presentation about the Changemaking process, participants discussed the strengths and challenges they exchanged via email. Each group used these discussions to identify a challenge and design an asset-based culturally responsive inclusive practices that could be replicated in both countries, culminating in a presentation to share at the Changemaking Symposium.

Igniting. The Changemaking Symposium, hosted by the private S.A. university, launched the igniting phase. The all-day event included five Changemaking group presentations: a) positive classroom management; b) using empathy to improve learner experience (voice, motivation, and behavior); c) effective ways to collaborate with others; d) informing and motivating learners in postsecondary transition support; and e) increasing collaboration with parents. Each group presentation included an interactive element including singing, dancing, role playing, and performing. Keynote speakers presented on effective teacher preparation, using Changemaking to increase sustainable collaboration and effective methods for supporting multilingual learners using translanguaging. At the conclusion of the symposium, participants wrote sustainability pledges by reflecting on the Changemaking process and their personal changes.

Research Design and Data Collection

This qualitative research study used an exploratory case study approach to investigate each participant's response to email prompts throughout the four-month project (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). Exploratory case study approach was used because there was no single set of outcomes (Seaton & Schwier, 2014). Following the assumption guidelines for case studies in TESOL, the Changemakers as a group, was identified as the case (Faltis, 1997; TESOL.org, 2020). Participation was voluntary; data were gathered from those who responded. During data collection, all identifiers were removed by an independent research assistant. Data were then analyzed using an inductive coding approach (Patton, 2015). Data were stored on a secure, confidential server. Researchers coded the data and identified focus codes to address research questions. The focus codes were categorized using colors during an iterative process with three researchers concurrently. Researchers met weekly to peer debrief analysis of each response, with agreement reached during all phases of coding (Miles et al., 2014). Using this process, inter-rater reliability was obtained with 100% consensus on all emergent themes (Yin, 2018) and analyzed for thematic response frequency.

RESULTS

This section outlines the frequency of responses and themes that emerged from the inductive coding process (Patton, 2015) of the six emails exchanges between the participants. Percentages were obtained by identifying the frequency of a theme (number of participants who wrote about the theme in their email) divided by the number of responses to the email prompt (rounded to the nearest whole number). From the 61 participants (41 from S.A. and 20 from U.S.) response rates varied from 15 to 40 responses for each of the prompts within the emails (as part of IRB approval, participants were free to respond or not respond to questions). Data were analyzed collectively as one group, the 2018 Changemaker cohort. Selected quotes are included to provide examples of the responses.

Email 1 Prompt: What would you like to get out of this project?

Forty responses were recorded for the first email prompt regarding what they hoped to gain from the Changemaker experience: a) Strategies (75%), b) Collaboration (63%), c) Support for Learners (50%), d) Global Perspectives (45%), and e) Addressing Barriers (45%).

Email 2 Prompts: Why did you become a teacher? What is your personal theory regarding the reasons for the achievement gap for diverse learners?

Sixty-six percent of the 32 respondents became teachers because of family members who were educators, negative school experiences, and self-motivation to pursue teaching. Over half of the participants (53%) stated that they hoped to somehow use teaching to become an agent for change. Some believed teaching was their passion (38%), wanted to share a love of learning (28%), or had a desire to cultivate positive characteristics within learners (25%). Participants wrote, "I became a teacher because these schools tend to have the less experienced teachers, less discipline in their schools, lower expectations and fewer resources" and "the educational issues we face today are directly created by, and cannot be separated from, the structures and ideologies of the past."

Email 3 Prompt: Is there any vocabulary or ideas you have read in emails that you would like

further clarification to fully understand within the context of each country?

Fifteen participants identified vocabulary differences, four requested information about the variance in grade level names, and four asked for clarification on education policies (White Paper # 6 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953).

Email 4 Prompts: Identify and explain at least three strengths you have in your community that support learning in your schools. Identify and explain at least two barriers to learning that you would like to address through your Changemaking project.

Twenty-seven responses to the prompt identified emergent themes in four categories of strengths: 1) Stakeholders (85%), 2) Attributes (67%), 3) Resources (67%), and 4) Events (34%). Strengths were found in the support of different stakeholders, such as educators, learners, families, administrators, volunteers, university faculty, and partnerships from public service personnel. Positive relationships with stakeholders, sharing experiences that lead to care and empathy, supporting diversity with languages, valuing social justice, awareness of disabilities, and ongoing teacher training were shared. Changemakers identified resources and events happening within their schools that support learning. The most common resource was designing and creating an inclusive curriculum.

Twenty-nine responses were recorded from participants regarding the question posed about barriers to learning. The research team identified eight emergent themes addressing barriers to learning: 1) Language and communication (34%), 2) Lack of resources (31%), 3) learner barriers to learning (31%), 4) Teacher training (31%), 5) Educational system (31%), 6) Family involvement (27%), 7) Socio-economic factors (24%), and 8) Culturally responsive curriculum and teaching (21%). One respondent wrote, "Barriers to learning are: not having enough materials to assist those who take time to adapt to the content." Another reported a need "to develop proper classroom management strategies which create lasting solutions."

Email 5 Prompt: How do you support learners in your classroom?

Out of the 17 responses about how participants supported learners, the researchers identified four emergent themes: a) Effective teaching methods (100%), b) Implementing instructional strategies (94%), c) Creating safe environment (65%), and d) Involving parents (12%). Respondents mentioned strategies such as using "differentiated instruction and scaffolding methods when working with learners who need more support."

Email 6 Prompts: Write your sustainable Changemaking pledge. Reflect on the process.

Twenty-two participants responded and seven themes emerged from their pledges: a) Self-awareness (64%), b) Culturally responsive instruction (64%), c) Positive behavior interventions and supports (59%), d) Building community (55%), e) High leverage inclusive practices and strategies (45%), f) Collaboration (41%), and g) Curriculum (32%). Representative quotes are found in Table 1. For example, respondents said they would "be sustainable as an educator and person, I will work to take care of myself to in turn be present and proactive in my classroom" and "I pledge to value my learners' life experiences. I pledge to view my learners from a strength-based lens." And finally, "I want to incorporate more learner-centered material and culturally relevant material into my curriculum."

Of the 21 Changemakers who responded, 19 (90%) of them mentioned something about the power of communication. One expressed, "All of the teachers became learners through this experience and they all had a voice in this changemaking process." Another emergent theme centered around wanting more time to hear from each other and collaborate (mentioned by 47% of participants). The third theme identified by nine people (43%) was a desire for access to pedagogy. One wrote, "This was such a valuable process. I have deepened my understanding of strategies, practices, and theories through the discussions we have had. Our group all contributed to the conversations and were active, open-minded listeners...I so enjoyed hearing the perspectives and experiences of other educators."

From the 17 responses, the researchers identified seven emergent themes: a) Learning about self (76%), b) Benefits of collaboration (71%), c) Communication (53%), d) Learning about others (41%), e) Create change (29%), f) Commonalities (24%), and g) Self-care (12%). Twelve respondents indicated they identified benefits of collaboration through the process. One respondent wrote, "I became part of an awesome community of people across the globe with home I share a passion for education and can now share challenges, ideas, solutions and resources." Creating change was described as, "I came away with the determination to make a difference in my community and throughout the world. I believe that I can continue to make a difference and after this conference, I believe everybody here can help change the world." Commonalities across the educators were reported by four respondents. One wrote, "During the process, it was evident to me that the issues of non-inclusive classrooms we see in America are very similar to those in S.A. Both countries have great language diversity and many cultures, races, and abilities represented."

Table 1

Frequency of Emergent Themes within the Responses to the Pledge Email Prompt 6.1 (n=22).

Theme	Frequency	Percent	Representative Quotes
Self-Awareness	14	64%	"This entire experience was heart opening, mind opening, and eye-opening...I have grown so much as a human and as an educator."
Culturally Responsive Instruction	14	64%	"My pledge is to be more culturally sensitive and aware of global diversity and inclusion with my students, classroom and school [and to] implement practice [based on] theory."
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports	13	59%	"I pledge to focus upon empathy and connection as the foundation of my classroom community by creating a space for students to express themselves, modeling vulnerability by being open with students, and remembering to engage in self care."
Building Community	12	55%	"I pledge to work for my community by engaging myself in community-based educational programmes that will help to educate and uplift the members of my community- to educate every [learner] allocated to me by parents, and my employer with trust and dignity."
High Leverage Practices (Strategies)	10	45%	"I can make this sustainable by using differentiated forms of assessment. I can also provide [learners] with options for prompts, questions, and projects to help them be more excited, and therefore more engaged with the material."
Collaboration	9	41%	"I can make sure my solutions are sustainable by collaborating regularly with my colleagues. I can also vow to be more vocal in self advocating ...to keep transparency and consistency."
Curriculum	7	32%	"I want to incorporate more student-centered material and culturally relevant material into my curriculum."

DISCUSSION

Through the adapted Changemaking process, educators from both countries identified ways in which they *changed*. From the onset, participants set three goals: to learn about each other, create change, and find global commonalities. Based on their final reflections, these three goals were met, reflecting the Changemaking initiatives of AshokaU (2014). Through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's integral structures (self, learners, classroom, school, district, and policy) the educators explored spaces within the educational systems. Using Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework of unpacking identities in relation to privilege and oppression, they challenged the status quo within their own teaching experiences of educational systems. With this information, they connected to each other, built professional networks, and designed culturally responsive inclusive projects that could support learners, families, educators, and policy makers in both countries using the adapted Changemaker process.

One educator reported, "The Changemaking project provided the space for me to think carefully about and identify what I am passionate about, the challenges in that area, and how I would address challenges." To do this, educators began with sharing barriers to learners' achievement, which they found stem from the same phenomena that have been observed by scholars across the globe: accessibility, pedagogical practices of educators, and oppressive factors within the educational institutions (Hanushek et al., 2019; Naiker, 2014).

On a positive note, the U.S. educators noted that they benefited from learning about S.A.'s rich language supports, such as translanguaging and teaching using mother-tongue (Makalela, 2015). Meanwhile the S.A. educators reported that they benefited from learning additional strategies to support learners' academic and behavioral growth within the classroom (McCleskey et al., 2017). Educators from both countries gained insights about ways their colleagues have addressed socio-economic obstacles, regional chal-

lenges, and the mandates to implement inclusive HLP (Jez & Luneta, 2018; Makalela, 2015; McClesky et al., 2017). Educators agreed that supporting and communicating with learners and families in their home language/mother tongue was a barrier to learning. Moreover, the participants shared barriers related to resources such as "learning equipment and materials, teaching and assessment methods, and organization and management of the classroom," academic and behavioral barriers to learning, especially to support "languages barriers between myself and my [learners]," and teacher training on culturally responsive inclusive practices. This supports Gilor and Katz's (2018) findings of the importance of providing inclusive teaching and guided experiences in teacher education. These findings support past research (Alexander, 2000; Baker et al., 2016; Carter & Welner, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Egalite, 2016; Hanushek et al., 2019; Makalela, 2015; Naiker, 2014). In line with Carter and Welner's (2013) findings, participants reported leveraging stakeholders, identifying positive attributes, accessing resources, and holding community-based events.

Researchers identified substantive results to answer the research questions posed in this study. The first research question examined how the Changemaking project increased preservice educators' and veteran teachers' knowledge of culturally responsive inclusive practices. Findings from emails one, five, and six were indicative of how the Changemaking project increased teacher knowledge of culturally responsive inclusive practices. For example, in email one, which was part of the *framing* stage, respondents shared that they hoped to gain strategies, learn about additional support for learners, and further understand the barriers, such as lack of access as a result of being part of the Changemaking project. In the *framing* email five, participants shared personal examples of how they supported learners by providing help with reading, using instructional strategies like differentiation and scaffolding, and creating a safe environment. By email six, when they were asked about how they would ensure the sustainability of the Changemaking process, educators wrote that they appreciated learning new strategies and requested more access to culturally responsive inclusive practices. The Changemaking process complemented studies by Jez and Luneta (2018) and Gilor and Katz (2018) which called for additional training and support on culturally responsive inclusive practices for educators to meet the needs of all learners in inclusive environments.

The data from emails one, two, and six identified the extent the Changemaking project empowered preservice and veteran teachers in effective collaboration. Respondents shared that collaboration and a global perspective were two of the most significant outcomes of the project. One participant wrote, "I gained valuable insights from everyone and hope we will continue inspiring each other to change the world and inspire our learners." The educators

corroborated past research (Curtis, 2013; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2014) with personal experiences, change agents actions, and the development of collaborative skills with others.

In email six, participants shared that their collaborative skills were greatly enhanced through the Changemaking process reflecting research on teacher training on effective practices (Baker et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Hanushek et al., 2019; McCleskey et al., 2017). Most felt that communication and time together were critical to the success of their projects. Lastly, participants' reflections on the benefits of collaboration from their experiences, and communication and learning about one another, was critical. Data aligned with Jez and Luneta's (2018) and Wei et al.'s (2009) work on collaborative PD for educators.

Finally, the third research question required an examination of empathy and commitment to the implementation of culturally responsive inclusive practices with sustainability in mind. Many respondents summarized experiences by reflecting on assets, building empathy, and making the process sustainable by writing. One wrote, "I also got [to] thinking about my strengths, which I sometimes take for granted (I speak 7 languages)."

Responses to email two regarding why teachers selected this particular profession, included their own personal experiences in schools and their ability to act as agents of change, thus demonstrating a desire to build and implement change. Participants told stories about the teachers who had impacted them and how they hoped to be the type of teacher who also impacts the lives of their learners. The educators shared the power of assisting learners' individual experiences in a way that supported their cultures and learning needs. Additionally, in support of strategies for their classrooms that would impact their future practice, participants' pledges indicated a shift in both self-awareness and awareness about culturally responsive inclusive practices, positive behavior supports, building community, using HLP, collaboration skills, and creating a more inclusive curriculum. The educators exemplified Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework and transformative approach that Banks (1994) promotes within multicultural education with statements such as, "I pledge to acknowledge the intersectional identities of all of my learners and to continually reflect on my privilege." As Gay (2010) recommended in her work on CRT, participants pledged to gain knowledge about their learners' backgrounds, set high standards for all learners, and work with both communities and families in building curriculum that reflects all learners. One educator wrote, "This entire experience was heart opening, mind opening, and eye opening. I feel like I have grown so much as a human and as an educator."

Lastly, reflection on email six yielded strong responses highlighting the importance of learning about self, the

benefits of collaboration, the critical need for communication, the ability to create change, the recognition of commonalities, and the need for self-care. To summarize, one educator reflected on their experience by stating, "It is important to always approach [learners] and other educators with empathy. I will maintain high expectations of myself, my colleagues, and my [learners]." She went on to say, "I also pledge to keep my classroom student-centered. I can make this sustainable by using differentiated forms of assessment,...I can also provide [learners] options for prompts, questions, and projects to help them engage with the material." Ultimately, the responses at the end of the project demonstrated that in fact educators can create change–the project's overall goal–through the adapted Changemaking process implemented to increase awareness and commitment to the use of culturally responsive inclusive practices.

Limitations

The study limitations included difficulty in finding common planning time prior to the *convening* due to the time differences across locations. Participants reported that due to the impersonal format of emails and the lack of access to wifi (due to cost in S.A.), there was difficulty in "digging deep" and connecting during the *framing* phase. During the *convening* and *igniting* stages, the educators identified a need for more time to discuss and develop their Changemaking projects and to learn fully from the other groups. Furthermore, the S.A. Teacher Union set restrictions on completing work outside of contractual hours. To this end, additional research should address the governmental aspects of global teacher participation. The sample size was small because a limited number of teachers were able to participate from each institution. SA administrators recommended demographic data not be collected (age, ethnicity, languages spoken) so as not to cause discomfort. Additionally, responses to the third email regarding challenges to vocabulary did not indicate any reportable themes; future studies should revisit this prompt. The study could be strengthened by longitudinal data collection to assess the sustainability in the implementation of culturally responsive inclusive practices, indicating a need for subsequent research on the impacts to these practices over time. It should be noted that two of the researchers also facilitated the project, which could have led to researcher bias. Lastly, the participants could have consciously or subconsciously responded to the prompts in ways they thought the researcher would have wanted (subject bias).

Implications

As our world becomes more connected and blended, and our education system becomes more inclusive, educators are tasked with an increased need to learn and apply strategies for supporting diverse learners and families within their school communities. The adapted Changemaking project increased global connection and collaboration by providing a network for educators to discuss challenges, strengths, and strategies for supporting diverse learners using an on-going and experiential PD opportunity. The process increased the knowledge and application of innovation and research-based practices for the preservice teachers, while serving as an opportunity for veteran teachers to have additional training on culturally responsive inclusive practices. In addition, the veteran teachers were able to mentor the preservice teachers on the realities of classroom management, time, collaboration, postsecondary transition, and working with families. The global and cultural exchange exposed them to unique and diverse educational perspectives, resulting in transformational experiences.

This project highlighted the need for more opportunities for educators to collaborate with colleagues from a variety of academic levels and international settings. If we are looking to the future of preparing more culturally responsive teachers, teacher education and in-service programs need to provide more opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges. These exchanges allow educators to develop deeper understanding of empathy and commonalities, a desire to support all learners, and strategies for improving marginalized schools.

The future of teacher preparation is moving towards collaborative processes where all stakeholders have a voice. Teacher education, government policy, and educator PD would benefit from replicating the Changemaker process by providing opportunities for collaboration, building cultural competencies, and sharing asset-based culturally responsive inclusive practices resources. How do we as a community of educators build these types of opportunities into our teacher training on a global scale? As Walton (2017) explained, inclusive education has a "wicked problem" (p. 85) which can only be solved with a global paradigm shift in how we respond to learners within more culturally responsive inclusive classrooms. Researchers and educators are called to address this "wicked problem" of transforming education through intentional collaborative teacher training and support of sustainable culturally responsive inclusive practices.

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