Preparing Educational Leaders for Social Justice, Action-Learning, and Democratic Activism[*]

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1 NCPEA Publications

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2 Sumario en español

Según Revista de Tiempo, la persona del año para 2011 fue El Protestador (Andersen, 2011). Del activismo revolucionario mostrado contra líderes autocráticos en Túnez y Egipto al principio del año, a las demostraciones contra paga reducciones en Atenas, Grecia en los meses del verano, a las protestas y ocupaciones contra la desigualdad de ingresos y la falta de oportunidades de empleo en el Parque de Zuccatti de Wall Street en la Ciudad de Nueva York (NYC), protestas y demostraciones civiles fueron encendidas alrededor

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[1]http://www.ncpeapublications.org/latest-issue-ijelp.html

del mundo por el fin del año. Abastecido de combustible por el Internet y medios sociales así como frustración y falta humanas de oportunidad, las fotografías circuladas por los medios ilustraron que el protestador público fue pluricultural en la clasificación. El Protestador representó varios países y las culturas unieron en presentaciones del activismo cívico.

NOTE: Esta es una traducción por computadora de la página web original. Se suministra como información general y no debe considerarse completa ni exacta.

3 Introduction

According to *Time* magazine, the person of the year for 2011 was *The Protester* (Andersen, 2011). From the revolutionary activism shown against autocratic leaders in Tunisia and Egypt at the beginning of the year, to the demonstrations against pay cutbacks in Athens, Greece in the summer months, to the protests and sit-ins against income inequality and the lack of employment opportunities in Wall Street's Zuccatti Park in New York City (NYC), civil protests and demonstrations were ignited around the world by the year's end. Fueled by the internet and social media as well as human frustration and lack of opportunity, photographs circulated by the media illustrated that the public protester was multi-cultural in classification. *The Protester* represented various countries and cultures united in displays of civic activism.

For some, the results were not confined to civil demonstrations, but in some countries also included incendiary mutilations and horrific deaths (Andersen, 2011). But generally, in multiple locations around the globe, *The Protester* exhibited peaceful protest and civic responsibility. For example, in the United States of America (USA), *The Protester* represented the union worker in Wisconsin, USA, who objected to a bill curtailing collective bargaining rights. In the Middle East, *The Protester* was the woman who wanted the right to vote, and the privilege of driving a car. In South America, *The Protester* was the student who spoke out against restrictive governmental educational policies. In Europe, *The Protester* was the pregnant civil servant who saw her pay cut in half, and then cut in half again. In Asia, *The Protester* was a family member, who sought protection from nuclear fallout that could endanger the food supply of his children. Whatever the reason, no matter the origin, the protester was the symbol of civic activism.

4 Problem

Within a private university in suburban New York State (NYS), graduate students in an educational leadership principal preparation program were reading the blogs, news reports, and stories about what was happening throughout the world. Within their educational policy course, they were delving deeper into world events, reflecting upon them, and discussing their meaning with their instructor and peers in the classroom, and over the Moodle (2012) network in discussion forums. Leadership students were trying to come to an understanding of the basic structure and foundation of their federal, state, and local governmental entities (i.e. its laws, rulings, and mandates) that were applicable to education. More importantly, they were discussing their own values, beliefs, rights, and responsibilities as educators (i.e. teachers, aspiring administrators, and administrators), who represented public and private suburban and urban schools.

Prognosticators had predicted a deficit in NYS educational spending over the next several years. Cuts to education would have to be made. Within their discussions with their instructor and their classmates, leadership students began to question various educational policy measures that had been proposed by their elected leaders at the national, state, and local levels in order to counter the deficit. Leadership students began to reflect upon their beliefs and values about education, and the decisions they would make on current policy issues and the effect on funding. As administrators and aspiring administrators, they began to question and reflect on how they would make up the deficits in their own school budgets, and how they would equitably and fairly distribute educational resources to *all* the learners in a school including the at-risk, the English language learner, and the special education student.

5 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline the framework of an educational policy course in a nationally recognized Master of Arts educational leadership principal preparation degree program at a private university in New York State (NYS). This educational policy course traces its foundational roots to social justice, action-learning, and democratic civic engagement. The emphasis on civic engagement is based on active learning precepts and field work that is multi-disciplinary in scope (i.e. education, business, government, law, and technology).

6 Theoretical Framework

Fowler (2009) stated, "public policy is the dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem" (pp. 3-4). According to Fowler (2009), public school administrators (i.e. superintendents and principals) are considered public policy makers who are required to interact with state and national governmental representatives. If interactions with legislative representatives are requirements for educational administrative jobs, then a first step for graduate leadership students in this administrative preparation program might be to establish contact with their elected representatives at the state and local levels of government.

6.1 The Faculty's Commitment in Preparing Exemplary Educational Leaders

This educational leadership program began in 2000 at the university's off-site urban center, and then in 2001, its courses were also offered at its main suburban campus. It was faculty's intentions from the on-set to emphasize national, statewide, and regional policy issues in its knowledge base. An educational policy course would offer leadership students a foundational basis for acquiring an overview of the roles and responsibilities of elected and appointed officials at the state and local levels, who impact resources for kindergarten through 12th grade schools (K-12). Even though this is a master's degree program, the goal of the faculty seemed comparable to the goals exemplified by faculty who teach in doctoral programs, which is to deliver a quality curriculum steeped in values of equity, fairness and opportunity for all children (Alford, 2007; Creighton, 2008; Hemmen, Edmonson, & Slate, 2009; Korach, Ballenger, & Alford, 2011; Reeves & Berry, 2009; Ringler & Rouse, 2007).

Additionally, this leadership program stresses a knowledge base composed of multiple perspectives (Creighton, Harris, & Coleman, 2005; Donmoyer, Imber & Scheurich, 1995) such as, integrating concepts from business (i.e. management, finance); education (i.e. research; supervision; diversity; special education; field internship); government (i.e. ethics and law; educational policy); and technology blended courses in its curriculum. These courses transitioned to the school of education from the business school and the liberal arts college (i.e. applied technology-based courses). The theories and concepts of cross-disciplinary scholars (i.e. Deming, 1994; Drucker, 1999; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Senge, 2006) are applied in the program.

When this leadership program was first introduced, the cohort model predominated (Israel, Docekal, & Kasper, 2010), and students interacted with one another primarily in face-to-face interactions in class meetings. Currently, with advances in technology, students also interact with one another and the instructor 24/7 in an asynchronous environment through the adoption of blended/hybrid courses over the Moodle (2012) network. In 2007, the educational policy course was redesigned from a traditional face-to-face delivery model into a blended or hybrid technological delivery format (Bogle, Cook, & Day, 2007; Fillion, Limayem, Laferriere, & Mantha, 2007; Jackson & Helms, 2008; Hollandsworth, 2007; Ragan, 2007; Ramirez, Burnett, Meagher, Garcia, & Lewis, 2009) on the Blackboard network, and in 2009, it was re-engineered again, and is now offered under a Moodle (2012) Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License over the university's in-house Moodle network.

Within this blended/hybrid format, approximately, half of the educational policy class meetings are in-person, and half take place asynchronously over the internet. Students meet on-line, and interact in discussion forums with their peers and the instructor. Questions that are posted every two weeks by the instructor deal with current policy issues appearing in the news media and on blogs, such as upcoming legislation at various

levels of government; proposed educational reforms and initiatives concerning the NYS budget; and specific viewpoints of policy makers, such as government officials and school board or community council members. For example, questions might be posted that deal (a) with bias in schools, (b) ideological conflicts in cultural values, or (c) on-going budget negotiations carried out in the media involving statements made by the USA secretary of education, NYS governor, NYC mayor, NYS commissioner of education, NYC chancellor of education, NYS board of regents' members, majority and minority leaders in the NYS legislature, and union leadership.

6.2 Emphasizing Values of Social Justice, Reflective Practice and Inclusive Community

Several values exemplified by faculty in this educational leadership program are part of the school of education's conceptual framework. These values are (a) social justice (Capper, l993; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKerrow, 2006), (b) reflective practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004), and (c) inclusive community (Senge, 2006). For example, delving deeper into the value of social justice, several academicians in McKenzie et al. (2008) proposed a design, structure, and content for an educational administration program that had its foundational roots in social justice concepts. According to McKenzie et al. (2008) faculty should emphasize social justice precepts in an instructional curriculum. Their goal should be "to prepare their students to live as critical citizens in society" (p. 111). Nine faculty members contributed to the McKenzie paper. They offered suggestions to support faculty who had principal preparation programs whose goal it was to "prepare principals for social justice activism in their schools and communities" (p. 130). From a pragmatic and practitioner approach, the publication and distribution of McKenzie et al. (2008) helped support on-going conversations and reflections of faculty members in this leadership program, who were teaching and re-engineering this educational policy course over several semesters in regard to the inclusion of social justice, reflective practice, and inclusive community precepts in its curriculum and field-based assignments.

6.3 Commitment to National Standards of Quality

The strategic mission of the faculty at this school of education is as follows:

6.3.1

As a scholarly community, we are committed to providing educational opportunities for professional growth . . . by creating authentic academic and field experiences, cultivating respect for the diverse populations we serve, embracing ethical practices, and preparing our students to become reflective change agents through research, collaboration and leadership.

In accordance with the mission statement, the aim of the leadership program is to actively engage in fieldwork at school and district sites. There are 360 hours of internship and site-based fieldwork subscribed in its programmatic coursework. In 2006, both the school of education and this educational leadership preparatory master's program were nationally accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Policy Board for Educational Administration members (NPBEA), and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), a member of NPBEA. ELCC is a "major player" in setting standards for college and university educational leadership preparatory programs (Green, 2013, p. 8), and this leadership program adheres to ELCC national standards in its coursework. Specifically, regarding the educational policy course and its structure, design, and delivery, it is applied and linked to ELCC Standard 6, which encompasses understanding the political, social, economic, and legal contexts of the broader educational community. In 2011, the leadership program was again approved for "national recognition."

Furthermore, according to Green (2013), NPBEA and its member organizations led to the development of the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC), which are based on the standards adopted by school officers across the 50 states, and Washington D.C. The ISLLC standards for its member organizations, which mainly apply to K-12 grade school districts are similar to the ELCC standards. Green states that "reflecting on the moral imperative of leadership, we give credence to diversity and the need to

establish a shared vision and an accountability system that ensure fair process and equity in meeting the needs of all children who enter the schoolhouse door" (pp. 2-3). This leadership program also adheres to ISLLC standards, and supports its students in setting a vision, one which recognizes opportunities for social justice for *all* students. Accordingly, students are also assessed regarding dispositions, attitudes, behavior, professionalism, and interaction with peers (Lindahl, 2009).

Offering a curriculum that adheres to national standards enables faculty members to stress values in which equitable opportunities for learning are offered to *all* students (Achilles, Irby, Alford, & Perreault, 2009; Alford, 2007; Creighton, 2008; Dembowski & Lemasters, 2006; Hemmen et al., 2009; Korach et al., 2011; Leithwood, 2010; Reeves & Berry, 2009; Ringler & Rouse, 2007). According to Achilles et al. (2009), the overall sustaining mission of educational leadership faculty might succinctly be described as making "education and schools better for students." In order to develop exemplary educational leaders, the faculty in this leadership program felt it was necessary to emphasize their values theoretically and practically through field experiences in K-12 grade schools.

7 Methodology and Methods

Action-research and active learning precepts are promoted throughout the program and in this educational policy course. For example, leadership students apply a qualitative methodology and engage in action-research regarding their final end-term projects. They apply the Mills' action-research model (2011) in regard to the development of initiatives in educational policy. The Mills' model includes four main points: (a) focus on a theme (in this regard, students focus on an educational policy topic and examine its pro and con aspects); (b) they collect data at a chosen K-12 school site; (c) analyze their data, and (d) formulate an action-plan that includes the development of new initiatives. Reflection is part of the Mills (2011) model.

The instructor (s) also engages in action-research, which includes focusing on improving and re-engineering the course each semester or cycle. For example, the instructor collects data from the students. The units of analysis are the students' "words" (Bogdan & Biklen, l992) as well as the instructor's field notes, students' presentations and final projects, and critiques of invited speakers (in person and posted in-house on I-Tunes University). These methods become the data sources. Based on the instructor's analysis of the data, the instructor makes changes to improve, and re-engineer the course for each incoming cohort of students.

7.1 Leadership Program Participants Are Diverse

Since the course has been offered as a blended/hybrid course, there have been 8 iterations, and 78 students in the course averaging about 10 students per course. Leadership students are diverse. They are predominately female (75%), and 60% of the students represent various minority and ethnic groups, such as African-American, Asian, Caribbean American, Hispanic, Moslem, and Orthodox Jewish. It is this diverse aspect that leads to multiple perspectives that are steeped in sharing values and cultural identification. Leadership students are primarily teachers and aspiring administrators, but there are current administrators (i.e. assistant principals, principals, and staff personnel) represented who are primarily from private non-sectarian and religious denominational schools (i.e. Christian, Jewish, and Moslem). This leadership program is a participant in a grant funded by the federal government, and administered through an urban governmental entity. It allows teachers and administrators in urban private schools to attend courses tuition-free. Books and course materials are reimbursed by the university. It is this governmental grant that solidified the diversity within the program, and fosters the generation of multiple cultural viewpoints concerning social justice issues.

8 Discussion and Results

Educational policy is about values; the values of the school community, and the stakeholders surrounding that school. Leadership students learn about policy as an historical and social phenomenon that starts with the context of values, and ends with an awareness of the policy-making process, and how to become an active

participant in the policy process. Policy issues are defined, debated, and in some cases, re-formulated and re-framed. For example, as the educational policy course evolves, there is a commitment to democratic activism that emerges in conversations regarding educational policy issues. Issues such as moral leadership; building collaborative partnerships; post-structural feminism; equity; and opportunity for *all students* become topics of discussion (Adams, 2000; Berry & Beach, 2009; English, 2005; Fowler, 2009; Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006; Leithwood, 2010; McKerrow, 2006). These issues may be initially introduced at in-class meetings, and then conversations are continued over the Moodle network.

8.1 A Context of Democratic Activism and Widening an Interactive Network

According to Fowler (2009), "today, business, media, and political leaders generally consider public education to be in crisis" (p. 8). Educational leaders are not even consulted when public policy issues are created. Unfortunately, according to Fowler, educators are considered "a major part of the problem" (p. 8). Therefore, the focus of the educational policy course is geared to changing the public's perception of educators, and broadening the educational leadership students' perspective to include awareness of the wider/broader community. To this end, the course has a three-fold purpose:

1. To increase student awareness of the policy-making environment,
2. To network, make contacts, share information, and engage in conversations,
3. To research and investigate policy issues, and formulate new policy initiatives that will lead to an increased sense of activism.

8.2 Theme 1: To increase student awareness of the policy-making environment.

The heart and soul of a blended course is the discussion board so students react to educational policy issues, and discuss these with their classmates in person, and over the Moodle (2012) network. Issues are taken from current events and happenings featured in the media (for example, television, newspapers, periodicals, press releases, internet, blogs, and social media). Major issues that have impacted this course have included: (a) a suburban school district scandal, whereby the school district superintendent and school district business manager were sent to prison for the embezzlement of school district funds; (b) the resignation of a NYS governor because of a personal scandal, and the subsequent appointment of NYS's first black governor; (c) a "marketing blitz" to residential homes by the NYS governor calling for a cap on district superintendents' salaries in downstate suburban school districts primarily; (d) upcoming implementation of a 2% cap on property taxes in NYS school districts, which will effect school district funding; (e) the give-back of previously negotiated contractual raises by school teachers; (f) the proposed freezing of superintendent salaries; (g) the potential closing of 33 schools in NYC; (h) the auditing of school districts by the NYS Comptroller; (i) implementation of the common core standards; (j) implementation of a Response to Intervention plan in K-4th grade schools in reading in every school district by July 2012; and (k) the publishing of teacher evaluations in the media based on student test scores.

The differences between urban and suburban representative school and community board members are compared. Also discussed are the differences in power each board member may have relative to NYC or suburban and rural areas. For example, community council members in NYC do not have budgetary powers; the mayor retains that power under "mayoral control," which was transferred to him by NYS. But like suburban school board members, NYC community council members (a) are elected, (b) have influence over policy, and (c) render support for the inclusion of educational programs. Local representative school or community board members are elected the third Tuesday in May throughout NYS. Surprisingly, only a very small number of eligible voters come out to vote in these local budgetary urban, suburban, and rural elections even though this is the most representative grassroots form of democratic activism at the local levels. More surprisingly, this is where a majority of tax dollars go. Voters not only elect their neighbors for these representative positions, but they also approve of school district budgets in suburban school districts on Long Island and in Westchester, and in rural districts, like Berlin or Hoosick Falls.

Additional policy makers include business, health, law, media personnel, and representatives of non-profit sectors, civil servants, senior citizens, and members of various professional organizations. Within their various associations, these representatives support education, but they also compete for state funding with K-12 school districts. There are 100 practitioner-based websites from governmental, media, social, legal, medical, business, and educational entities posted to Moodle's External Links section such as, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP); American Library Association; American Medical Association; Chamber of Commerce. Students are asked to review various websites, and evaluate them.

Leadership students research profitable business companies and philanthropic organizations on these websites that offer grants for schools and classrooms. One leadership student received a grant from a philanthropic organization established by a former president of the USA to set up a Parent Resource Room in a needs-based Brooklyn neighborhood. Several leadership students received grants from several neighborhood business corporations for direct classroom use.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (l992) in action-research, students' "words" are the primary units of analysis. Comments from discussions and students' reflective statements have included the following statements:

- I don't see how anyone could not stay informed or try to take a true interest in becoming better informed after being opened to the issues that we have focused on this semester. Some say that not knowing is better, but at this point I think it's scary looking back, and realizing how much information I was not helping myself to and did not know (Female).

- Before registering for this class, I really didn't have a clear picture of what educational policy was about . . .from listening to all of our guest speakers both in class and online, I really gained a clearer picture of how the system works (Female).

- This course has been an eye-opener for me. I plan on becoming more involved in my local district and attend more school board meetings. I may even run for a school board seat in the future (Female).

8.3 Theme 2: To network, make contacts, share information, and engage in conversations.

Over the Moodle network and in class meetings, leadership students share their (a) backgrounds and values, and information about their home and school districts in regard to past and recent school budgets, upcoming elections, meetings attended, and governmental representatives. Leadership students are asked to: (a) attend a community council (urban) meeting or a suburban school board meeting (especially those that discuss budgetary issues); (b) collect informational materials regarding upcoming local educational elections (i.e. of school board members, community council officials, and NYS or national representatives); (c) contact their NYS Assemblyperson and NYS Senator regarding educational policy issues; and (d) view videos or listen to audios of guest speakers that have been posted by instructors on the university's close circuit network over I-Tunes University.

Moreover, leadership students are required to attend a local suburban school board or urban community council meeting, and report back on the agenda, the policy issues discussed, and the policy players at the meeting. Particularly interesting have been the comparisons of urban to suburban meetings. For example, recent NYC planning meetings have included hundreds of citizens in attendance petitioning to keep their local schools open to surprisingly poorly attended meetings in certain suburban school districts. Some suburban citizens seem to be unmotivated to attend a local school board meeting even though most of their property tax dollars go to fund educational school districts.

In addition, leadership students are asked to network with one another, and share the viewpoints of their state and local representatives, and local policy-makers. Representatives in the NYS Assembly and NYS Senate in their home or school locations are contacted primarily. Contacts are also made at the national level with NYS legislative representatives and senators. But more often, connections are made with policy

makers at the local and state levels. Leadership students are asked to telephone and e-mail their elected officials in their home and school districts, and ask for brochures, positional papers, and informational items that they can share with their classmates, and their colleagues in their own K-12 grade schools. Students bring these informational brochures to class, display, distribute, and discuss them.

If representatives are not responsive, this is also shared and discussed. Sometimes, leadership students visit local district offices and engage officials (or their aides and spokespersons) in conversations concerning current educational policy issues. Then, based on these connections and conversations, students evaluate their representatives by assessing whether they are responsive, knowledgeable, and truly understand what is happening in K-12 public or private schools. Assessments are shared in-person, and over the Moodle network in discussion forums.

Guest speakers who are educational policy makers that influence the education of K-12 grade children directly and indirectly are invited to speak to the leadership students; their talks are usually taped, and then posted to I-Tunes University. Subsequent cohorts or classes of leadership students can also review, comment, and react to these "talks" in reflective and reactionary papers that they write. Because events change quickly, these "talks" are timely for an average of one to two years. At times, students have compared the "talks" of various speakers who have been invited back to see if their positions have changed, or they compare "talks" of speakers to gain multiple perspectives of various positions concerning policy matters.

In-person speakers have included: (a) presidents and vice presidents of local suburban school boards; (b) suburban school district superintendents; (c) a NYC district administrator; (d) a NYS school board association and suburban county member; (e) the NYS Comptroller, who was also a former Assemblyperson and school board member; (f) a NYS Senator and former school board member; (g) a NYS Assemblywoman; and (h) a NYS Board of Regents member. Leadership students write reflective papers comparing and critiquing the various guest speakers, and their commitment to providing educational opportunities in K-12 schools. Some speakers have been invited in multiple times, and their talks are compared and updated.

Leadership students commented:

- After I contacted my NYS Senator's office, I received a personal phone call from my NYS Senator. I arranged to stop by to pick up whatever his office had to offer concerning education. . . in another conversation with my Senator, it seems that no one can adequately explain why they are voting to close down my NYC school to him. We spoke on the phone for over 20 minutes about the report on my school, which states that, although substantial gains have been made across the board, the school will be closed (Male).

- I have sent numerous e-mails and made many phone calls to my NYS representatives without any luck . . . but I will keep trying. I am very surprised because I would have thought that this would have been an easy task. If I was a politician, I would want to reach out to my community members especially in regard to schools and children. Every time I call I get an answering machine. . . I will call again, and keep trying (Female).

- The school board meeting started a little after 7:30 pm, and lasted until 1:00 am. I had never been to a budget school meeting before. . . There was not as many guests as I figured would be there; it was only around 40. . . Each item in the budget like the purchase of security cameras was discussed line-by-line. . . The superintendent in my suburban district for the third year in a row has not taken the contractual increase. The current superintendent's salary in this suburban district is over $230,000 annually. This year school enrollment is a bit under 6300 students . . . other superintendents are also freezing their salaries because of the budget deficit in order to get school budgets passed. . . One board member felt that the district could hold the line without a 2% property tax increase this year . . . but the superintendent wants the increase because it will protect the district's long term financial position. I say "no increase this year" because there is still plenty of money in reserve. Let's give the community a break (Male).

Theme 3: To research and investigate policy issues, and formulate new policy initiatives that will lead to an increased sense of activism.

In their reflective comments and their course evaluations, leadership students have reported that their perspectives have widened as a result of the assignments in this educational policy course. For example, in their final assignment, educational leadership students are asked to choose a current educational policy issue that interests them. They are asked to investigate this policy issue from the perspective of its strengths and weaknesses, and then recommend policy initiatives or solutions. In this regard, leadership students engage in qualitative action-research (Mills, 2011). The resulting action-plans of the leadership students are the recommended initiatives and suggestions they present based on their research findings.

Educational leadership students have debated or chosen topics that have included the strengths and weaknesses of: (a) implementing a national core curriculum; (b) use and banning of cell phones in schools and classrooms; (c) a 4-day school work week; (d) home schooling; (e) single sex public schools and classrooms; (f) student and faculty dress codes and uniforms; (g) response to intervention (RtI) policies; (h) vouchers and tax credits; (i) attendance policies; (j) teacher evaluations tied to student performance on standardized tests; and (k) school closings and policies for schools in need of improvement. Leadership students are encouraged to try to seek funding sources for implementation of their final policy projects and initiatives. Educational leadership students present their policy proposals to their classmates in technological presentations, which are peer evaluated (Topping, 1998), and in written policy papers, which are instructor evaluated.

Leadership students stated:

- This course helped me focus on formulating an acceptable use policy regarding cyber bullying at my private school (Female).

- After attending a NYC Panel for Education Policy (PEP) meeting, I will admit that I have truly lived in a land of make believe. This meeting really exposed me to what is going on in NYC. First of all, there were police and security all around every entrance and in the building. The teachers in the auditorium were angry and upset. There were signs up, and there was chanting for schools "not to close down or relocate." There were also news channel cameras taping the panel. . . The NYC Chancellor of education was there and started the meeting . . .The main topic was to vote on proposals on school utilization – relocating and phasing out schools, or closing them out. That is why all the teachers were in a rage. (Female).

- Because of what I learned in this course, I became an active participant in the policy process. . . The district that I work in has been going through a lot of changes, finger-pointing, and media coverage. . . Well the employees and the community had enough. A trip to the state capitol was planned; we were going to exercise our power . . . and I became one of the anchors in the planning process. Upon our return from Albany, we contacted local assembly members and senators for area meetings. As for the budget, the boards, building personnel, and the community, we have continued meeting to reach an amicable agreement, which has worked out for the district. As a result of our activism, teaching jobs were saved (Female).

9 Conclusions and Implications

It is only when our future educational leaders gain an awareness of the educational policy arena, and they engage in the expansion of their networks that they will be consulted when public policy issues are shaped. It is only by becoming active civically that educational leaders may be able to change the public's perception of the work they do. When this happens, *all* school children will benefit, including the children of marginalized females and minority racial and ethnic groups. It is by engaging in action-learning and civic activism that educational leaders will be able to influence the policy-making process, and propose solutions to the problems

in our public (and private) schools. This paper (with its embedded teaching model and assignments) will hopefully contribute to the knowledge base of educational leadership preparation, and may be of interest to faculty and instructors who teach educational policy because of its emphasis on the values of social justice, active-learning, and democratic activism.

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