

March 15, 2015

Final Report

Dr. Aileen J. Watts

Faculty Professional Development Grant

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Arkansas Tech University

Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI)

2015 Education Diplomacy Institute

Washington D.C.

March 4 - 8, 2015

Aileen J. Watts, Ed.D

Assistant Professor of Education

B. Restatement of Profession Enhancement Opportunity

The Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI) 2015 Institute for Global Education Diplomacy was held in Washington, D.C. on March 4 – 8, 2015. My presentation entitled “*Innovative International Programs Empowering Equitable Education Opportunities for Children Worldwide*” was presented at the Inclusion and Equity in Education Discussion Table (see below).

C. Brief Review

Dr. Emma Savage-Davis, the 2014-2015 President of the National Association of Teacher Educators focused her presidency on the importance of Advocating for the Silenced: The Educators’ Vocation. Her intent was to draw attention to the underrepresented, indigenous, and impoverished populations who have been silenced by policies and governmental decisions stating that, “it is the duty and responsibility of ALL educators to be that voice or help others find their voice so that all can be heard. It is about making decisions without the voices of those who will be impacted by those decisions. This takes vision, courage, and tenacity, which we have not always been allowed to have as educators.” To achieve Dr. Savage-Davis’s vision she created two parallel commissions and tasked them to explore ways that ATE and Teacher Education associations around the world could better define what access to equitable education and social justice means for all teachers and students both domestically and globally.

I was asked to serve on the Social Justice and Access to Equitable Education in the Global Community and along with my fellow commissioners were give the responsibility to develop a position statement and two summative publications of our research. One publication, which would focus on the policy and practice related to this topic and the other comprised of

case studies of exemplary programs in higher education that support and promote social justice and access to equitable education. Lastly, we were asked to create a mutual position statement for ATE that will address the similarities between the national and global perspectives. My presentation at this year's Institute for Global Education Diplomacy focused on the research that has been culled to date regarding exceptional international teacher education practices. I also serve as a SPA Program Reviewer for ACEI so having the opportunity to attend and to network with fellow colleagues and reviewers is also an invaluable professional opportunity.

D. Summary of Experiences

Diane Whitehead, the Executive Director for ACEI and her amazing team of dedicated colleagues put together a phenomenal institute comprised of presenters from all four corners of the globe. The sessions I attended included: Mara Paulini Machado (Atlas Corps Fellow) discussed her involvement in influencing education in Brazil, Diya Nijhowne (Global Coalition for the Protection of Education from Attack) shared various ideas to prevent attacks on schools and universities, Hasan Ferdous (UN Academic Impact) taught about the UNAI global initiative, Jill Christianson (National Education Association) discussed cross-cultural communication strategies, Donald Lee (International Committee for October 17, Day for the Eradication of Poverty) shared approaches that promote meaningful participation among disadvantage populations, Samira Al Moosa (Permanent Delegation of Sultanate of Oman to UNESCO) taught various means for developing global citizenships, Alu Museisi (Embassy of South Africa) discussed the interdisciplinary knowledge and skills necessary for developing local and regional coalitions, and Kavita Hatipoglu (Center for Education Innovations/Results for Development) shared the concept of "intellectual flexibility" and discussed its role in enabling people to adapt

to changing circumstances creatively. The colleagues who shared their presentations at my discussion table included: Su Lyn Corcoran (University of Manchester) who discussed her work ensuring quality inclusive education for street children in Ghana, and Patrick Makokoro (Nhaka Foundation) who discussed his role in supporting early child development in Zimbabwe.

E. Conclusion

This institute was a transformational experience for me. I have always been committed to social justice issues and advocating for the marginalized, and have intentionally selected Universities (GWU, BYU-Hawaii) where I could work with faculty and students from around the globe. This amazing conference enabled me to network with equally passionate and pro-active international colleagues and re-invigorated my inherent desire to contribute in this arena. Some of the actions I plan to take as a result of this experience include: petitioning Dr. Bowen to consider becoming part of the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) initiative that aligns institutes of higher education with the United Nations in sharing a culture of intellectual social responsibility. Through this Diplomacy Institute I learned of several international teacher exchange opportunities through Indonesia, Nepal and others and am compiling information to share with my department. I also attended several presentations by professors who discussed how they designed their own study abroad programs for their students and I intend to explore this as a possibility for our own teacher education candidates. Lastly, I have always been interested in teaching abroad myself so I am currently in the process of applying for the May 8th review cycle for the Fulbright Scholar Program.

The opportunity to attend, present and network at international institutes such as this is invaluable, not only for my work on ATE's Global Social Justice Commission, but also as I

endeavor to enhance my own student's global awareness and responsibility as well as consistently search for new and innovative ways that my department and university at large can consistently contribute to fostering our international partnerships. We all play a vital role in improving sustainable development and this global citizenship requires that we each share in the responsibility for ensuring equitable access and effective education opportunities for all!

References:

UNAI: <https://academicimpact.un.org>

Nepal: <http://www.psdnepal.org>

Nhaka Foundation: <http://www.nhakafoundation.org>

Fulbright: <http://www.fulbrightteacherexchange.org>

Discussion Tables

Salon AB, North Tower

TABLE 6: INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Street-connectedness and Inclusion: Adapting to the Local Context in Education Development

Su Lyn Corcoran, University of Manchester

This presentation analyzes the effectiveness of international agendas in ensuring quality inclusive education for street-connected children. It highlights the importance of local knowledge and adapting to cultural context when developing education-based policy and practice.

Girls on the Run: An Examination of Females in Children's Literature

Michelle Sobolak, University of Pittsburgh; April Mattix Foster, George Mason University

An exploration of the impact of the "call to action" to create more gender equality in children's literature over the past 40 years through an examination of best-selling picturebooks.

Global Diplomacy: Increasing Access to Early Childhood Development

Patrick Makokoro, Nhaka Foundation

Nhaka Foundation channels support to preschools, utilizing early learning centers/preschools as an entry point. We focus particularly on the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Our goal is to ensure that all children within the program enjoy their right to a protective and nurturing environment within which their normal psychological, social, and physical development can be assured.

Innovative International Programs Empowering Equitable Education Opportunities for Children Worldwide

Aileen Watts, Arkansas Tech University

This presentation will focus on innovative international programs, policies, and partnerships that are successfully empowering children throughout the world through equitable education opportunities.

Development is a cultural and contextual process. As the global community shapes a development agenda which frames a vision of the world for future generations, it is essential that high-level, international discussions are informed by the voices of people from around the world, particularly the most disadvantaged. Deliberations about how to continue the path of eradicating poverty and create a sustainable development framework are ongoing. Education is central to development, and support for lifelong learning from early childhood education through adulthood is necessary to ensure conditions in which human potential may flourish.