DEVELOPING MULTILINGUAL TEACHER EDUCATION COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN POST-WAR SRI LANKA

5TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION
19-21 OCTOBER 2016 BANGKOK, THAILAND

SREEMALI HERATH
POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE FOR ENGLISH
OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA
SRI LANKA AT A GLANCE

- Colonized by Portuguese (1505), Dutch (1658) and the British (1796)
- Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948.
DEMOGRAPHICS

Languages Spoken

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Percentage distribution of population by ethnicity, 2001

- Sinhalese: 82.0%
- Other: 0.7%
- SL Moor: 7.9%
- Indian Tamil: 5.1%
- SL Tamil: 4.3%

Percentage distribution of population by religion

- Buddhist: 76.7%
- Other: 0.9%
- Roman Catholic: 6.1%
- Islam: 8.5%
- Hindu: 7.8%
By the 1990s, the LTTE had established a de facto regime in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

The war ended with the killing of the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, by the Sri Lankan government in May 2009.
POLICIES TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACE
THE NATIONAL GOALS OF EDUCATION (1992)

• The achievement of National Cohesion, National Integrity and National Unity.

• The establishment of a pervasive pattern of Social Justice.

• The active partnership in National Building activities should ensure the nurturing of a continuous sense of Deep and Abiding Concern for One Another.
This policy intervention stemmed from the perceived need among government to implement a coherent and well-coordinated peace education initiative.

Seven strategic areas and activities identified by the national policy:

- Curriculum
- Teacher education
- Second National Language
- Whole school culture
- Integration
- Co-curriculum Research
RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Three teacher education programs that offer pre-service teacher education programs for English language teachers

**Focal participants**
- 12 Teacher Candidates (4 from each site)

**Teacher Candidates**
- Western College (WC): 12
- Central College (CC): 8
- Northern College (NC): 10

**Teacher Educators**
- 12 Teacher Educators (4 from each site)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Course Work, Co-Curricular Activities</th>
<th>TCs Reside in the College</th>
<th>Internship</th>
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MEASURES TAKEN TO FOSTER MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS
<table>
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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Language</th>
<th>Religion</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Tam</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CENTRAL COLLEGE (CC)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NORTHERN COLLEGE (NC)</strong></td>
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MEASURES TAKEN TO FOSTER MULTICULTURALISM WITHIN THE RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

★ **Course work**

- Second National Language (2NL)
- Education for social cohesion and peace

**Practice teaching**

- Two week practice teaching (4 times during the first two years)
- 1 year internship

**Co-curricular activities**

- Aesthetics
- Sports
- Cultural activities
- Community based projects
- Student clubs

Extra curricular activities
EXPERIENCES IN THE PROGRAM

- Learning environments that are conducive to multicultural initiatives can foster positive outlooks toward diversity (Winitzky & Barlow, 1998).

- Providing more opportunities for intergroup contact can help estranged communities reconcile (Donnelly & Hughes, 2009).

- It is important to create opportunities for prospective teachers to interact with others rather than simply studying about them. This experience can help new teachers take on leadership roles and reconstruct the educational landscapes they are working in in order to create greater equity, opportunities and outcomes for all students, irrespective of their backgrounds (Zeichner, 2011).

A multicultural experience

“We got to meet people from different ethnic and religious groups. I didn’t know Sinhalese people before. I had only seen them on TV. But in college we got involved with them. We also celebrated all Sri Lankan religious and cultural events” (Cala)
“When my juniors ask, I tell them they should dance and sing. ... The college is the only place we get to do all these things. Now we can’t put our track pants and run. I have decided not to criticize others or stop them from [doing] what they want to do” (Cala)

“We celebrated all cultural festivals like Poson, Vesak, Christmas, Sinhalese and Tamil new year, Ramadan. There is no distinction between religions there. I am a Catholic, but I helped with the Buddhist events” (Wasana)
“During practice teaching I went to different kinds of school. I learnt a lot about those students. It was a new experience” (Waseem).

“There where people from all cultures. They have to respect our religion and virtues. For example, we Muslims can’t light lamps. Women can’t dance or sing in front of men. Women can’t run or do phys ed. They need to respect our religion. We can’t destroy our culture.” (Waseem)
RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE "OTHER"

Teachers who are working towards social justice should develop inclusive idealism and attitudes (Weldon, 2010).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes the notion of "caring," and the importance of having high expectations of all learners (Gay, 2002).

"You need to know the students’ first language" (Withya)

“I don’t think we need to use the students’ L1. You can use visuals and good teaching aids to get the message across. It’s a lot of hard work. You have to prepare a lot for each lesson. You have to make lots of teaching aids. But it is very rewarding” (Chaman).
“It’s a lot of hard work. I need to learn about that culture. I have to make sure I say the right thing. But if it’s a Tamil school, I can’t just walk in” (Neela)

“We need to preserve our culture. We need to go back and work in our communities” (Waseem)
It is important to explore teachers’ experiences, beliefs, attitudes and values as a means of assisting them to create caring and equitable classroom environments (Hawkins, 2011; Zeichner, 2011).

TE programs need to help prospective teachers to identify and confront their beliefs about society, education and the social conditions of schooling (Lister & Zeichner, 1990).
“I am glad I spent two years in college. I got to know people from other communities” (Chaman)

“Here in Jaffna there are only Tamils. I wish we had more students from other parts of the country coming here. Then we can talk to them” (Neela)
“Sometimes we are okay with them [Muslims]. Sometimes we are not. We don’t accept their ways and they don’t accept our ways. There are some good Muslims too. They like to learn about our culture” (Camal)

“I used to think discrimination is not good. Now I have changed my ideas. Sinhalese have only this country. Tamils have Tamil Nadu, in India. Muslims can go to Pakistan or an Arabic country. After I went to college, I realized that we needed to stand up as Sinhalese. They [minorities] are competing with us. They want to go beyond the Sinhalese. I don’t want to discriminate. But my experiences have taught me there needs to be discrimination” (Chinthu)
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- The diverse TC population provided cultural exposure.
- TCs got an opportunity to mingle with all ethnic, religious, linguistic and social groups.
- Awareness of other cultures was fostered through the celebration of cultural festivals.
- No explicit instruction or discussions about the measures taken to create multicultural communities, the benefits of diversity or the policy on social cohesion.
- The TCs had a very superficial understanding of the ‘other’.
DEVELOPING MULTILINGUAL TEACHER EDUCATION COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN POST-WAR SRI LANKA
A focus on war

Develop Inclusive Teaching Selves

Foster inclusive attitudes

Whole program approach to social cohesion

Be immersed in an inclusive multicultural community

Curricula that raises teachers' critical awareness

Explicit instruction
THANK YOU!