Teaching and Learning Democracy: Collaborative Development of Courses on Citizenship

David Kahane and Bettina von Lieres
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Summary

How can educators work together to enhance work on democracy and citizenship? This paper analyses the trajectory and dynamics of the Teaching and Learning (T&L) group, an initiative that brought together educators from seven countries to address the challenges of developing and delivering courses on citizenship and democratising teaching and learning environments. Part of the Citizenship DRC, a wider research consortium that examined the dynamics of citizen participation in diverse contexts, the T&L group centred on peer-to-peer reflection, learning and support. Its innovative ways of working and success in developing a wide range of courses and trainings challenge expert-driven models of pedagogical development. They also point to the importance of transnational collaborations in enhancing curricula, courses and teaching methods that effectively support both learning about democracy and citizenship, and democratic teaching capacities.

Keywords: teaching; learning; democracy; citizenship; pedagogy.

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Acknowledgements

About the Citizenship DRC

The Teaching and Learning Group described in this paper was part of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability (Citizenship DRC). In 2001, the UK Department for International Development funded a coordinating team, based at the Institute of Development Studies, to assemble a consortium of researchers to investigate how citizens hold institutions to account and claim their rights. The Citizenship DRC supported long-term research with the objectives of generating new knowledge, disseminating it widely to decision-makers and practitioners, and building the capacity of partner institutions to carry out high-quality research, communication and policy engagement.

Over the course of a decade, the Citizenship DRC built a network of researchers, policymakers, practitioners and activists and produced more than 150 empirically grounded case studies that examine how citizen action and participation shape states and societies. Taking a 'citizen's perspective', looking upwards and outwards, these studies offer a unique insight into how citizens see and experience states and other institutions that affect their lives, as well as how they engage, mobilise and participate to make their voices heard.

Acronyms

ADRA	Acção para o Desenvolvimento Rural e Ambiente
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Action Committee
CEBRAP	Brazilian Centre of Analysis and Planning
CSO	Civil society organisation
DRC	Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability
DFID	UK Department for International Development
PRIA	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
T&L	Teaching and Learning
UWC	University of the Western Cape, South Africa

1 Introduction

How can educators work together to enhance their courses and trainings on democracy, citizenship and participation? Around the world, learning activities on these themes are being developed in universities, schools and colleges offering formal graduate and postgraduate programmes; in government, professional and business institutions offering in-service training programmes for professionals; and in civil society organisations (CSOs) offering training courses. These new activities, courses and programmes are too often developed and delivered in isolation from one another, with little sharing of lessons on curriculum building and pedagogy. Recent initiatives have shown how useful global collaboration can be in helping educators address the challenges of developing courses and democratising teaching and learning environments (Stackpool-Moore *et al.* 2006). In this Practice Paper we analyse one such global initiative, showing how the quality of courses depended importantly on the democratic quality of the collaboration between participants: how they shared teaching methods, supported one another as peers, challenged their habits as teachers and developed capacities to enact change within their own institutions.

The initiative in question was the Teaching and Learning (T&L) group of the Development Research Centre (DRC) for Citizenship, Participation and Accountability. The DRC was a research consortium that investigated how citizens hold institutions to account and claim their rights, which ran from 2001 until 2011.[1] The T&L group came together in 2007, formed by DRC members who wanted to explore methods and materials for sharing DRC research in the contexts where they were teaching. It comprised researchers and practitioners from seven countries who developed courses and trainings on citizenship for diverse contexts in the North and South. T&L group members – including the authors of this paper – came from profoundly different political contexts and institutional cultures, and had varying teaching practices. They developed methods and materials for three broad kinds of teaching: university courses at old and new universities in Bangladesh, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, and the UK; donor-sponsored events where public officials came together as 'champions of participation' to share learning and build networks in Angola, Brazil and southern Africa; and an NGO-led distance learning course in India.[2]

This paper suggests that the experiences of the T&L group hold lessons for teachers developing courses on democracy, citizenship and participation; for peers wanting to collaborate in course and teacher development; and for organisations and institutions wishing to support the development of both courses on these themes, and democratic teaching capacities.

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1   To learn more about the DRC, see www.drc-citizenship.org.

2   For an index and descriptions of the courses and syllabi produced by the T&L group, see www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/teaching-citizenship.

This paper begins by describing the DRC, with Section 2 examining its research and Section 3 exploring its methods of collaboration. Section 4 describes how the T&L group adapted the DRC's ways of working. Section 5 discusses the T&L group's processes of reflection on teaching methods and members' experiments with democratic pedagogies, and how these played out in different teaching and political contexts. Section 6 turns to the impact of DRC materials on courses and trainings, and how this was influenced by context. Section 7 looks at the effects of the courses and trainings offered by T&L group members on their teaching institutions and NGOs, and at some of the new training and curricular initiatives that are now in prospect as a result. Section 8 considers some lessons that might be drawn from the T&L group's work by those interested in building teaching collaborations, fostering innovative course development and building teaching capacities.

2 DRC research: Democracy, citizenship and participation

The T&L collaboration took root in a particular soil – seven years of shared enquiry and knowledge production by the DRC, with its distinctive perspective on democracy, citizenship and participation. The DRC was formed in 2001 and funded for ten years by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Over 60 researchers and activists from more than a dozen countries examined the dynamics of citizen participation in diverse political contexts. From the outset, the DRC linked research, teaching and action. It aimed to generate new knowledge, disseminate it widely to decision-makers and practitioners, and build the capacity of partner institutions to carry out high-quality research, communication, and policy engagement. Many of the DRC's research projects were empirical case studies built through participatory and action-oriented methods that brought academics and practitioners together as co-researchers, with the enquiry itself becoming a catalyst for further action. DRC research was often embedded in inclusive processes of social and institutional learning and change, and its approach to research and knowledge transfer supported increased citizen awareness and action on issues as diverse as *Dalit* rights in India, the recognition of CSOs in Angola, and democratic health service provision in Brazil.

The products of this research include 150 empirical case studies of citizen participation from the global South, written up in diverse ways – as policy briefings, book chapters, journal articles, and IDS working papers. The DRC archive also includes a large selection of participatory videos produced by the researchers, practitioners and communities involved in researching the case studies, and theoretical material written mainly by Southern academics.[3] These diverse materials speak to both academics and practitioners.

DRC research looks at how action by citizens and their associations shapes states and societies. During its first five years, DRC research focused on how poor people themselves understand citizenship and rights. The second five

years examined in more detail the struggles and mobilisations through which citizens claim their rights, and how these mobilised citizens secure social change. This focus on citizen action is particularly important in the context of contemporary development discourse. Over the last two decades, the idea that citizen engagement and participation can contribute to improved governance and pro-poor development outcomes has become a widely accepted narrative, and there has been a corresponding surge in scholarship and cross-national learning about citizen participation as a route to democracy building and pro-poor political transformation. Much of this work responded to a perceived weakening of democratic institutions in the North and South. In response to this democratic deficit in the South, international development agencies and donors have, alongside their emphasis on economic growth, also focused on building political institutions. This work has often taken a traditional approach to the promotion of democracy, creating formal institutions and processes on the assumption that active citizenship and democratic participation will follow. In contrast to these approaches, new networks of researchers and activists have called for a different approach to building democracy, one that looks at how ordinary citizens and their organisations participate to deepen democracy, and how citizen participation can strengthen institutions through struggles for rights, demands for accountability and advocacy for government reforms. This societal approach challenges top-down paradigms of development that focus more on institutions than on local realities.

In the global North, proponents of the societal approach have coalesced around a movement advocating deliberative democracy as a route to reinvigorating democratic institutions through deeper forms of citizen engagement in policy processes. In the global South, concerned researchers and activists have called for greater citizen participation and state accountability through new social movements and new forms of participatory governance, particularly in more fragile political contexts. In examining the dynamics of democracy building in Southern contexts, DRC research has focused on the interaction between states, institutions and societies. Positioning citizens at the centre of building democracy, it has conceived of citizens as rights bearers at the heart of development – not simply as consumers of what states have to offer, but as active agents of change. DRC research has shown that learning or gaining citizenship is not only a legal question, but also involves the development of citizens capable of claiming rights and acting for themselves.

DRC research has shown that citizens often learn democracy through practice rather than theory. Informed and aware citizens who can hold states accountable and exercise rights frequently gain experience, learn skills and build alliances through action, not simply through training, or membership of CSOs. DRC research has shown how rights are made real through mobilisation, how mobilisation extends and deepens democracy, and how important and tangible democratic outcomes are associated with citizen

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3   For the full archive of DRC research, see www.drc-citizenship.org.

participation. These include the construction of citizenship: the understanding of rights and the development of political agency, particularly in contexts where citizens are forced to engage with authoritarian governments and where their rights are denied by the state. Often, the benefits of citizen action accumulate over time, and enhancing skills in one area can strengthen the possibilities of success in others (Gaventa and Barrett 2010).

This, then, is the body of research that T&L group members wished to bring into teaching and training: a critical perspective on participation and democracy that seeks to 'see like a citizen' embedded in complex relations of power. As we describe below, this critical content led us to interrogate our methods of teaching; but first it is worth exploring how our roots in the DRC gave us a particular understanding of how to support one another as teachers and course designers.

3 Ways of working: Democratic collaboration in the DRC

Those of us who formed the T&L group had helped generate the DRC research described in Section 2, and our sense of its transformative quality related not just to its content but to the unusually successful transnational interdisciplinary collaboration that produced it. We had the sense – later tested and clarified through the T&L group's work – that bringing the DRC's deepest learning into our classrooms and trainings meant finding out how to echo its ways of working. These held a rich message about how complex teams can develop to address complex problems, and about the nuanced processes of aligning and coordinating work over deep differences of culture, location and resources (Brown and Gaventa 2008).

3.1 How we collaborate shapes what we produce

The DRC began with an unusually strong commitment to doing research through democratic collaboration, which it sustained through a decade of work. This commitment had several sources. First, the DRC was initiated to address gaps in development research that could only be filled by an unusually robust network of South-South and North-South collaboration. In proposing to investigate forms of citizenship, rights claiming, and participation leading to pro-poor outcomes, the DRC was fully aware that new methodologies and approaches to comparative analysis would be called for. Second, key figures in the initiation of the DRC had backgrounds in participatory action research, community development and activist research.[4] This gave them a specific commitment to democratic research processes, both within the research team and with communities implicated in the work, as well as the skills needed to build open, egalitarian research relationships. Third, the DRC researchers were united by a shared politics. While there were deep differences of perspective and experience within the team, especially in its early days, there was shared

commitment to pro-poor outcomes and to redressing power imbalances, both in development research and practice communities, and in wider society. There also was a shared critique of the tendency of Northern-funded research 'partnerships' to extract case studies from the South for analysis by Northerners.

For all these reasons, the DRC strived from the beginning to be more than a gathering-in of discrete pieces of research conducted in different contexts. Research agendas, questions, methodologies and analytical frames were developed through iterative collaboration across the whole team. This democratic collaboration had several key elements.

3.2 Learning across deep diversity

The DRC was formed to address complicated questions in the field of development, and had to embody this complexity in its team. The team bridged multiple boundaries and divides: between academic disciplines, North and South, regions and perspectives within the South, and researchers and practitioners. Participants came to the DRC with very different methodologies, contextual knowledge and understandings of the politics of their research. It is easy to celebrate difference as an epistemic resource, and much more difficult to weave together a complex international collaboration across actual differences, especially when many participants carry the scars of less than successful international collaborations in development research. Moreover, the learning goals of the DRC sought not just to network different research programmes, but to shift and merge methodologies and frameworks through the collaboration.[5]

3.3 Democratic leadership

Southern partners and researchers entered the DRC with experience of pitfalls in North-South research collaboration, and many wondered whether this would be one more extractive process. Control and leadership were crucial and thorny issues. From the beginning there was strong affirmation of values of transparency, internal democracy and sensitivity to power in governance and leadership structures and decisions. Budget- and priority-setting, for example, which most often incline toward Northern institutional power in development research partnerships, were on the table for the whole team. This move in particular helped Southern partners to believe that the DRC could be a different sort of collaboration. The growth of this trust and the emergence of a

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4   For example, John Gaventa, who was Director of the Highlander Center's grassroots community
       education work before taking a leadership role in the DRC; and Rajesh Tandon, who was co-founder
       of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia.

5   In this context as in many others, the robust funding for the DRC was a strong enabling factor,
       allowing face-to-face meetings on a regular basis.

governance structure suited to the complex diversity and power dynamics of the DRC were encouraged by self-consciously facilitative leadership.

The DRC's leadership structure developed a complexity reflective of the transnational membership and contexts across which it worked. There was a centralised coordination team based in the UK, but clearly delineated responsibilities were distributed across a Steering Committee, Central Advisory Group, Review Group, country teams and co-conveners of research streams. These different bodies were accountable to one another through joint meetings, review of projects for funding and critical assessment of research projects and findings. These leadership structures were in turn informed by cycles of critical reflection and dialogue across the whole team.

Overall, the skilled, complex leadership of the DRC created a container within which trusting relationships formed among participants, and this trust enabled participants to learn deeply and openly from one another.

3.4 Iterative articulation of shared values, purposes and analyses

One of the greatest strengths of the DRC as a learning community was its ability to build a coherent programme of research by repeatedly returning to core questions about the purposes, questions, methods and analyses that united its work. This iteration had a number of dimensions.

First is *iteration across time*. Substantial project resources were devoted to face-to-face meetings of the whole team, as well as of themed subgroups. Out of the increasingly close relationships formed in these workshops and writeshops came a willingness to explain one's work, be challenged and tease out common threads and lessons from diverse case studies and analyses. These intense, lengthy meetings also provided incentives to have work ready and to be prepared, so they were also an important part of the motivational structure of the DRC.

Second is *iteration across levels of analysis*. The DRC began from specific case studies in which the contexts and methodologies were selected by researchers. At subsequent team gatherings, these cases were revisited and revised to draw out synthetic understandings and develop new tools and questions that were then taken back to the context. This dialectic between close attention to context and abstraction from cases meant that the research did not trace a straight line, and many researchers struggled to connect their contextual case studies with the broader themes articulated at team meetings. But the ongoing iteration between the contextual and the collective kept learning supple enough to address the diversity of applications without constructing overly neat categories or oversimplifying synthetic points.

Third are *iterations of reflection and action* by members of the team. DRC meetings were held in retreat settings, and provided space away from the busyness of our lives as researchers and activists, a freedom for the play of ideas. This alternated with our return to the communities where we were doing research, and to our lives in universities and NGOs.

Fourth are *iterations of exploratory research and producing published outputs*. A major DRC output was the Claiming Citizenship series, eight multi-authored edited volumes published by Zed Books, which addressed some of the key themes emerging from the research (Coelho and von Lieres 2010; Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Gaventa and McGee 2010; Gaventa and Tandon 2010; Kabeer 2005; Leach, Scoones and Wynne 2005; Newell and Wheeler 2006; Thompson and Tapscott 2010). Creating these books required not only intense work by authors of individual products but also intense exchanges between authors and editors, which represent a further iteration of the DRC research findings.

These various iterations of knowledge production had two profound effects. First, they forged very strong relationships within the team. The diverse motivations and expectations that brought researchers to the DRC developed into a sense of shared values, goals and fate. DRC meetings, while intellectually robust and feisty, were gatherings of close friends. This created space for struggles with perspectives, methods, politics and contexts that continued to diverge in important and generative ways. Second, the persistent return to core questions in the research allowed the activities and programme of the DRC to be highly adaptive to both new learning and changing global conditions. As the story of the T&L group will make clear, the DRC has been strikingly ready to adjust its activities and priorities in response to new opportunities that further collective goals.

A final form of iteration relied on the strength of trusting relationships and built the DRC's adaptive capacity: *iterative learning about process*. There was ongoing innovation and learning in process design, facilitation, leadership and governance. With each meeting, each e-conference, each new Zed volume, DRC members were able to draw on a deeper knowledge of the styles and needs of those involved, of strengths and limitations of past processes, and of emergent challenges. One of the pleasures of DRC meetings was experiencing and testing new ways of working together.

3.5 Sustaining a critical edge

Given the longstanding collaborative relationships and strong personal bonds in the DRC, it took work to sustain a culture of mutual critique, especially because the research was self-consciously at odds with some of the disciplinary norms to which participants might habitually have had recourse. Here the deep diversity of the team and their contexts provided an important resource, since each researcher's presuppositions and analyses ran persistently into challenges of generalisation to other cases. Moreover, the iterative process of collective synthesis and agenda-setting meant working to justify analyses to one another and skillfully finding common ground across difference.

Contextual specificity and difference was made especially vivid for DRC members because meetings moved from country to country, and at most meetings in the South there were site visits to communities in which members were doing research – from health clinics in the Zapatista areas of Chiapas, to

the *favelas* of Rio, to meetings with homeless HIV-positive men in Gugulethu township in South Africa. There was a strong culture of hospitality as one country team hosted others, alongside the acute intellectual and political challenge of encountering the radically new, and making space for it in individual and collective work. These site visits were touchstones for DRC work, reminding members of the value of intellectual suppleness and also of the political stakes of the research.

The DRC continually experimented and innovated in its practices of peer review – ways of presenting work in progress, configurations of reading and response, bringing in external readers, and so on. Tensions did emerge, though, between sustaining inclusive relationships and research methodologies in the DRC, and pushing for critical responsiveness in the research. The practices of critique outlined above were strong, but participants' responsiveness to criticism varied, as did the extent to which published work was revised in light of criticisms. Individual team members remained the arbiters of the focus and quality of their research to a degree unusual in a funded research collaboration.

3.6 Dialectic with other institutions and communities

The relatively small size of the DRC enabled a culture of collaboration and continual learning. Most members felt importantly changed by the experience, including through reflection on mediation, advocacy and translation implicit in their roles as researchers. There were important shifts in members' understandings of their disciplinary identities, in the methods they used as researchers, in their sense of connection to the communities where they did research, and in the vernaculars and venues through which they shared what they learned.

This process of individual and collective change became part of what bound the DRC together. But it also constituted one further site of iteration: repeated movement between the intellectual and institutionally friendly space of the DRC, and researchers' own communities at universities and NGOs. There was an insistence from the early days of the DRC that 'capacity building' had to include Southern universities, given their roles in training those pivotal to prospects for democracy and citizenship. Many members of the DRC, however, found it difficult to embody and implement the DRC approach in their own institutions. There was a significant gap between enjoying and benefiting from the DRC's collaborative processes and facilitative leadership and being able to host them for peers in home institutions. For some members, the DRC's culture and structure felt distant from local norms of reward, credentialing and prestige.

This tension between DRC identities and identities within home institutions could be generative. It kept alive an awareness of the power dynamics that surround research, the challenges of translating DRC work and the forces confronting the normative and analytical perspective on development that the DRC forged. DRC members had to learn to create spaces for encounter and dialogue as they moved within and between locales.

This brings us to the T&L group, a subset of DRC researchers that turned attention concertedly to how to create space in their home contexts for teaching others about DRC research, and how to democratise spaces of teaching and learning in ways that communicated the approaches to citizenship, participation and accountability developed in the DRC.

4 Ways of working: The T&L group's collaboration

By its seventh year the DRC had produced a large body of work, and many researchers were bringing this into their teaching and training activities for university students, citizens, NGOs, civil servants and elected officials. This raised a host of questions: which materials were most appropriate for different learning contexts? How might materials be adapted for different audiences? How to weave together case-based and theoretical learning? What pedagogies were most suitable for teaching and learning DRC research? In addressing these questions, T&L group members used and adapted the DRC's distinctive ways of working.

4.1 How we collaborate shapes what we produce

It was a sign of the DRC's culture of collaboration and its openness to new issues and directions that these pedagogical questions quickly became a common focus of attention. Those asking them had very different disciplinary backgrounds and teaching experience, but we gravitated toward one another with confidence that the right kind of peer-to-peer learning could enrich our teaching and address the challenges of bringing DRC materials into our classrooms, trainings and distance courses. This emphasis on peer-to-peer learning reflected the DRC's focus on developing democracy through 'seeing like a citizen,' rather than through either expertise or top-down imposition of models and structures. When it came to challenges in bringing DRC research into our teaching and learning contexts, what counted most was our direct knowledge of these contexts. We never seriously considered solving our problems by bringing in curriculum experts, or having the most experienced teachers among us develop curricula and teaching methods for others. We were, in other words, attentive to a complex politics and ethics of teaching and learning about democracy in our diverse settings, and indeed were curious about how the analytical and normative themes of our research on citizenship would play out in our work as a collaborating group of teachers, and in the teaching and learning contexts where we worked.

This is not to say that we were of like minds as we formed the T&L group. We were able to draw on shared political commitments and strong comradeship born of our work together in the DRC, but one of the pleasures as well as challenges of the T&L group lay in the very different places we came from in our pedagogical habits and politics.

4.2 Learning across deep diversity

There were many layers to the diversity of the T&L group. We had different degrees of teaching experience, from winners of national teaching awards (David Kahane in Canada) to NGO-based researchers looking ahead to their first time leading university-level classes (Simeen Mahmud and Lopita Huq in Bangladesh). We used different forms of delivery (face-to-face courses in most cases, but distance learning in the case of Martha Farrell, Mandakini Pant and colleagues in India). Our courses were of different durations (semester-long courses in many cases, but also a course of five consecutive days for John Williams' South African undergraduates, and short-duration trainings events in southern Africa, Brazil and Angola). We had different learners (undergraduate and graduate students, civil servants in shorter training courses and NGO workers in the PRIA [Society for Participatory Research in Asia] distance course). The following outlines the trainings and courses that emerged from the T&L group's collaboration:

● In India, Martha Farrell, Mandakini Pant and their colleagues developed a distance learning course on International Perspectives on Citizenship, Democracy and Accountability as part of a postgraduate diploma offered by PRIA, a prominent Indian NGO. This course aimed to provide students with knowledge about citizenship, rights, democracy, participatory governance, claiming accountability and transparency; and to develop students' political literacy and relevant skills in order to enhance their ability to effect change. Students were adult learners: practitioners, development professionals and new actors wanting to make a career in development. See www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/perspectives-on-citizenship.

● In Angola, Idaci Ferreira prepared a training course for officials on behalf of ADRA (Acção para o Desenvolvimento Rural e Ambiente), an Angolan NGO, as well as a training on participatory research methods for other Angolan NGOs. She was especially interested in how to innovate in teaching methods in these courses.

● In Canada, David Kahane taught two iterations of a joint undergraduate/ graduate seminar at the University of Alberta that contrasted citizen participation in Northern and Southern contexts using case studies from the DRC, and participatory and democratic teaching methods. See www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/democratizing-citizen-engagement.

● In South Africa, Laurence Piper established a seminar, 'Contemporary Democratic Theory – Enhancing Public Participation in Local Governance around the World', for senior undergraduates in political science at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). His goal was to introduce students to concepts such as citizenship, democracy and participation from a citizen's perspective using participatory methods and case studies. See www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/contemporary-democratic-theory. He also co-designed and convened a learning event for 50 civil servants, elected officials, and other 'champions of participation' from eight southern and east African countries. This five-day event, hosted by the UWC in partnership with the DRC, Logolink International and the Isandla Institute,

enabled participants to reflect, learn and strategise on how to advance the agenda of public participation on the sub-continent.

● Also in South Africa, at the UWC, John Williams revised a course in 'Governance, Administration and Ethics in the Public Sector', part of the public administration module. This introduced senior undergraduates to concepts like good governance, power, accountability and participation, and explored the relationship between governance, politics, economics and administration, while grounding concepts of governance and citizenship in everyday realities. See www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/governance-administration-ethics.

● In Mexico, Carlos Cortez taught in a Masters in rural development at the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Mexico City. He wanted to support his students in reflecting on concepts and theories of social agency, power, social movement, citizenship and rights; and then in applying these concepts to their own work through action research. Students were practitioners in rural development who studied for their Masters while still working in their organisations. See www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/actors-and-social-change.

● In Brazil, Alex Shankland, Vera Schattan Coelho, and Arilson Favreto worked with CEBRAP (Brazilian Centre of Analysis and Planning), a research institute in São Paulo, to develop a training initiative for Brazilian public officials who sat on and convened participatory committees. This included organising a workshop in the Amazon region in which Ministry of Health officials and indigenous leaders discussed approaches to training that would enable health service managers to work better with indigenous people in these committees.

● In Canada, Bettina von Lieres taught a new third year undergraduate political science module at the University of Toronto and also developed co-taught courses for the UWC in South Africa. The courses explored theories and practices of citizen participation in the global South. The Canadian students were mostly women and most were first or second generation Muslim immigrants; they had very little background in political theories or understanding of citizenship in the global South. See www.drc-citizenship.org/pages/citizenship-political-participation.

Beyond the variety in these learning contexts, two more levels of diversity are worth bringing into view. First, the challenges and impacts of bringing DRC materials into these settings were shaped by political and social context. DRC research focused on democracy and citizenship, with specific emphasis on examining issues of democracy from the perspective of citizens. But the citizens learning from the teachers and trainers in the T&L group were in settings ranging from relatively stable political contexts with long histories of public discourses and practices of democratic citizenship, to more fragile political contexts with largely absent or unresponsive states and few or no possibilities for active citizen engagement.

DRC materials were critical and challenging in all of these contexts, but especially in countries that were undergoing or had recently undergone difficult

transitions to democracy. For researchers, students, policymakers and activists in these contexts, DRC material offered examples of how citizens can hold states accountable where states are not responsive to their needs. In middle-income countries such as South Africa, India and Brazil, for example, with relatively stable states and a growing array of avenues for citizen engagement, but still many barriers to citizens' efforts to influence public decisions, the challenge is often to develop and build citizens' organisations as a counterweight to the state. At one of our meetings, John Williams from the UWC in South Africa pointed out that DRC material, with its emphasis on the role of engaged citizens, 'raises the importance of citizens' rights, which together with state accountability is an important challenge in South Africa. Most politicians view the state as the only answer to democracy, undervaluing the role of citizens. This was echoed by Laurence Piper, who observed that

> in South Africa, political action independent of ruling party is weak. Not only is it weak, but it is regarded as suspect by the ruling party, which sees itself as the only legitimate ruler. DRC material draws attention to citizen voices that are more independent. It introduces very different conceptions of democracy. The idea that you can democratically protest against your government is not widespread amongst the ruling party in South Africa.

Referring to the Pioneers project, which brought together public officials and civil society leaders from several southern African countries in a three-day training workshop on citizen engagement, Piper went on to report that

> participants from other parts of the world said that South Africans are very state-centric and that they had paternalistic expectations of the state. DRC material teaches us that citizens need not wait for the state. One of its important messages is that citizens need to build civil society and take responsibility for shaping decision-making.

For some T&L members, other members' work with grassroots groups came to inform their own sense of the encounters that could bring learning in their own context. Martha Farrell from PRIA reflected that

> the association with the T&L group, which brought together the academic and the practitioner, made me realise that learning from the field must be an integral part of all course teaching for students to develop the concept of inclusive citizenship. The diverse experiences of the grassroots, shared by CSOs as the voices of the marginalised, were powerful tools in helping bridge the gap between theory and practice.

In fragile states with weak democratic institutions, citizens often have little experience of formulating or claiming rights. There is often little organisation in civil society, and rights are denied. Here, the challenge is to build both state and society, and to build the capacity of citizen leaders to claim rights. Several DRC case studies speak directly to the challenges of building democracy in fragile states. Idaci Ferreira, working with an Angolan NGO, said that

> in Angola, democracy faces real challenges. Issues of participation and accountability are very important for us as Angola is a very new democracy. DRC material has helped us with capacity building in our

*training of local community leaders. From the point of view of the
community groups, some leaders told me how empowered they felt to
speak outside of their local community meetings after this process of
learning from DRC materials. They now speak in spaces that were before
dominated by NGOs. They now talk about how they have become leaders
in their own negotiations with the government at the municipal level.*

In some contexts with unresponsive states, citizenship and rights are
disconnected in public discourse. DRC material focuses our attention on rights
as a crucial way of understanding the challenges of building democracy. As
Simeen Mahmud pointed out in one of our meetings,

*in Bangladesh, we don't think of citizenship in relation to the state. So
bringing in case studies that highlight the idea that mobilisation around
rights and engagement with the state is actually a form of citizenship is
important. It shows students how important it is to move from the idea of
belonging to the idea of claiming. DRC case studies that have highlighted
this have been important for us.*

DRC materials helped to focus these issues of context within particular courses
and trainings, and the ongoing dialogue in the T&L group helped members to
strategise about which materials to select and what methods to use, so that
their learners could begin to integrate diverse critical perspectives on
citizenship.

This diversity of political contexts, learners and courses made all of our
discussions in the T&L group multi-levelled. It was plain that neither teaching
materials and strategies nor challenges would be readily transferable from one
context to another. We were always translating between contexts, which had
the benefit of denaturalising each of our experiences and presumptions about
ourselves as teachers and about our learners. Rather than jumping right to
solutions, we needed to take time to really hear one another's narratives about
our teaching and its environments. Hierarchies of expertise tended to crumble
as we realised that each of us had to be the arbiter of appropriate strategies
and methods for our own context. For readers of this paper designing or
participating in teaching collaborations with more similarity of context, this
denaturalisation is something worth cultivating; it builds real curiosity about
different scenes of teaching, and opens us to encountering our own teaching
contexts with new eyes and a willingness to try new things.

A final axis of difference among T&L group members was around cultures of
teaching and learning. The group began with some members wishing to focus
on course content – assembling readings and materials for different teaching
purposes – and others interested in participatory pedagogies that could
inculcate the critical perspectives embodied in DRC materials. This reflected, at
least in part, differences in pedagogical cultures, which ranged from the
didactic to the Freirean. Conversations and debates ensued about the politics
of different pedagogies, as well as constraints imposed by different teaching
and learning systems on the acceptable repertoire of teaching methods.

4.3 Democratic leadership

The T&L group was relatively small – 20 at its largest, with a core of fourteen participants emerging in the second year; it also was more modestly resourced than the DRC as a whole. So governance was in some ways straightforward. When the T&L group was established in 2007, the DRC coordination team identified co-conveners (David Kahane and Bettina von Lieres) who created frameworks for the group's work, guided it day-to-day, designed meetings, processes and agendas, handled communication, and were responsible for funding decisions in consultation with the DRC coordination team. When the T&L group met face-to-face, members collectively decided on plans and budgets. The key – and often tricky – role for the co-conveners was helping the group through the alternation between intense collaboration and co-governance when together, and a tendency toward fragmentation and quiet when apart. This is a challenge in any complex collaboration, particularly one with global reach, but it has particular implications for a teaching collaboration, where the tough work is done in the moment of teaching. We struggled as a group to find mechanisms to enable moral and practical support between meetings.

4.4 Iterative articulation of shared values, purposes and analyses

The iterative dynamics of the DRC described in Section 3 were also prominent in the T&L group. Just as the DRC found coherence in its activities, values and outputs by repeatedly returning to core questions about common purposes, methods and analyses, the T&L group began with openness to diverse conceptions of what we might do together and built shared understandings as we went.

This included *iteration across time*, with four intensive workshops for the same group of teachers spread over three years. These were meetings of several days that allowed us to delve into one another's teaching questions, challenges and innovations, and also to model – in the group process of the meetings, as well as in dedicated pedagogy sessions – some of our teaching and learning methods. These meetings also provided important incentives to produce work for one another – first syllabi, then reflection papers on our courses, and finally retrospective analyses of our work together. These workshops were crucial to the development of courses and of our sense of ourselves as teachers.

There also were counterparts in the T&L group to the DRC's *iteration across levels of analysis*. We began with members' own experiences and needs in their contexts. These were very diverse – for example, some members were developing new syllabi and methods for determinate courses, whereas others were trying to create institutional space to teach a course using DRC materials, and building the course with this strategic purpose in mind. The specifics of each of our situations as teachers remained central, and indeed provided the grist for much of our cross-context learning. Yet out of these particulars arose shared values about the importance of democratising the classrooms where DRC materials were taught, and also a nuanced sense of the sorts of methods and materials that could transfer across contexts, and the limits of this

transferability. The approach we took in the T&L group differs from many workshop and training models for the development of teachers and courses. These models often give participants well-honed frameworks and exercises through which to establish learning goals, assignment structures, course materials, lesson plans and the like, and these filter the articulation of each teacher's particular context and challenges. The T&L group could not easily have started this way, given the very different stages of development of each member's courses, but the more organic and chaotic movement from the particular to the general gave us rich learning opportunities. Differences in our pedagogical philosophies and habits and the politics of our teaching were able to arise at unexpected moments, and led to some of our most important reflection and learning. As already noted, these unexpected dissonances and trajectories of reflection built an intense curiosity toward one another's teaching.

Given that the case studies in the T&L group were constituted by our own teaching experiences, the *iteration between reflection and action* took on an importantly different shape than in the DRC. There was the dynamic – familiar from the DRC – of our meetings in retreat-like settings, creating space for new forms of reflection, insight and even self-making. The stresses and imperatives of our classrooms and crowded lives would recede, and we could engage more adventurously in reflection on our particular courses, and on the politics and vocation of teaching. The teaching and learning focus of our work, however, complicated the possibility of this sort of reflection from afar. As every teacher and trainer knows, the relational and epistemic complexity of teaching is vivid as it happens, but can be very difficult to reconstruct after even a few hours have passed. Reflection from afar is useful but needs to be complemented by rigorous practices of reflection within one's teaching life – whether this means noting right after a class what went well and what should be changed, or keeping a teaching journal that preserves insights and questions while fresh. Moreover, the products of reflection and peer support in teaching are most powerful if they lead to quick cycles of experimentation in learning (e.g. 'My voice was too prominent in today's session; I'm going to consciously try to speak less tomorrow'). So some of the most valuable forms of collective reflection on teaching require peers and mentors close at hand, and can't be deferred to a distant retreat. The T&L group did seek to implement quick cycles of self-reflection and peer support in an online setting: members committed to posting after each class about successes, challenges, surprises and intentions for changes in practice; and the rest of us committed to providing feedback. However, in addition to the challenge that our courses and trainings happened on different timelines, it was a continuing struggle to sustain this constancy of involvement in our busy lives.

The description of DRC ways of working included *iterations of exploratory research and producing published outputs*, and this did not have a strong counterpart in the T&L group. Our workshops were often preceded by the circulation of informal reflection pieces and artifacts like syllabi, but we did not try to synthesise our learning in published products. There were a number of reasons for this. First, all T&L group members were also involved in other DRC activities that involved publishing, and there was a limit to our capacity to

produce writing. Second, the T&L group's work had developmental and practice-focused qualities that differentiated it from the overt research focus of the DRC; it would have changed the T&L group to orient our collaboration to contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning, and shifted us away from the emergent and often tentative quality of our work together.

Finally, the T&L group was focused on *iterative learning about process* – indeed, much more so than in the DRC membership as a whole. There were resonances, which fascinated a number of T&L group members from the beginning, between the analyses of citizenship, power and mediation in DRC research, the dynamics of classrooms and trainings, and the design of our own work together. So we focused overtly on the collaborative methods used in our workshops, reflected on these together – using evaluation tools that some of us subsequently adopted in our teaching settings – and were deliberate in sharing leadership of sessions so that we each could experiment with collaborative learning methods with the critical and immediate support of peers. This is a dimension of the T&L group's work that could have been developed and amplified further. It was a setting for active learning that provided a rich opportunity not only for modelling and experiencing teaching methods in each moment of work together, but for close attention to questions of pedagogy, power, cognitive styles and the ebb and flow of energy and learning as experienced in each collaborative moment.

4.5 Sustaining a critical edge

As with the DRC as a whole, the T&L group shared a sense of the political stakes of its activities. T&L group members were brought together by a conviction that teaching DRC materials well would make a real difference. This combined with a strong sense of comradeship to enable and encourage critical engagement.

In the T&L group, this critical engagement was diffused in a number of ways. First, as noted already, most members of the group saw little of each other's actual teaching practice. We mostly interacted with one another's descriptions of our teaching, our students, our contexts, and our challenges, and this made the objects of critical engagement less particular and concrete. Second, there was the lack of formal written products already discussed; in the wider DRC, it was such products and their peer review that provided the most exacting moments of engagement and intellectual accountability. Third, while there was early discussion of shared formative and summative evaluation instruments for our courses that would have allowed comparative learning as well as critical engagement, the differences between our contexts as well as limitations on our time kept these from being developed.

While the reality of our classrooms, and the nuances of our courses and trainings, may not have been available for detailed critique, there was deep critical learning when it came to our self-conceptions as teachers. As the voices of T&L group members in this paper reveal, the most powerful legacies of the T&L group collaboration were in our capacities and self-understandings.

While some of these changes came from moments of direct challenge, many others came from witnessing the pedagogical integrity and political courage of others; this was in itself a form of critical engagement. This points to the importance of teaching collaborations that are enduring, involve real honesty and collegiality, and include profound contrasts in teaching challenges and contexts.

4.6 Dialectic with other institutions and communities

The T&L collaboration was designed precisely to create new teaching and learning realities in our home institutions and communities – to be a safe, generative, critical space in which to develop method and content for trainings and courses elsewhere. Its distance from these teaching and learning contexts was an asset in enabling creative discussion and reflection; and yet we described above how this distance may also have placed limits on the kinds of support the collaboration could offer. However, it is clear that where T&L group members did influence their own institutions, much was owed to the diversity of experiences within the group. As Simeen Mahmud from Bangladesh remarked, 'in the T&L group, we really learned from the diversity of contexts. If new practices can be introduced in such diverse contexts, then it can also be done in our contexts'. We discuss some of our impacts on home institutions in more detail in Section 7.

The discussion in this section of how the T&L group worked reflects the extent to which the group developed over time a strong shared interest in the dynamics of the trainings and classes we led – that is, in teaching methods as well as content. In the next two sections, we look more closely first at this exploration of and learning about democratic pedagogy, before moving on to discuss the significance and reception of DRC materials themselves.

5 Exploring democratic pedagogies

Many of the initial conversations that gave rise to the T&L group were about getting DRC research materials taken up in university courses. This early framing was challenged, however, by the fundamental commitments of the DRC – to knowledge creation as a collective process, and to research, democracy and pedagogy that start with the experience of ordinary people. This suggested that communicating DRC perspectives required engagement with learners' own experiences of democratic agency, within as well as beyond the spaces of classrooms and trainings.

In early meetings of the group, discussions of classrooms as democratic spaces would engage an enthusiastic subset of participants, while others would either sit quietly, or respond that these methods were not applicable in their contexts. These divisions over the appropriateness of participatory pedagogies were often an entry point to resonant descriptions of our institutional and classroom conditions. This was especially the case for some of the Southern

partners in the T&L group. In many north American and European teaching institutions, teachers are used to having the space and resources to experiment with democratic teaching methods. In many Southern contexts this is not the case, especially for teaching spaces in countries such as Bangladesh and Angola that have histories of authoritarian governance.

Quite apart from norms and constraints imposed by teaching and training institutions, there were contextual reasons for doubting the applicability of participatory pedagogies. For example, Laurence Piper of the UWC in South Africa pointed to how styles of classroom interaction were shaped by some students' involvement in movement politics: participating in discussions, students would default to a rigid style of chairing typical of political meetings. John Williams, from the same institution, explained how ill-equipped his students were for extensive participatory learning: students came from diverse linguistic groups, were often woefully unprepared for university studies, and were overflowing crowded classrooms into the hallways. How could classroom work in groups, for example, be anything but a disaster in this setting? Yet, given boldness in experimentation, there could be openings for new methods. Williams offered an example:

> At the beginning of each class, students are invariably resistant to rearranging their desks in a format other than the pre-designed linear patterns in which they would find them on entering a classroom. When I would kindly request them to make a semi-circle, they would look at me as if I were some crazy teacher trying to force them back to their kindergarten years, where children are allowed to play with one another. When I explain to them the pedagogical merit of sitting in a semi-circle rather than in a linear fashion, they would rather sceptically respond to my request, and start to rearrange the desks into a semi-circle, whilst inquisitively looking at me – and one another, as all the students were now in full view of one another – and rather anxiously await further instructions from me. When an impetuous question would come from one student as to why the arrangement of desks is important in my class, I explained that it would allow for a greater sense of connectedness – we can now all see each other's faces, body language, gestures, all forms of communication! They would then slowly but still nervously start to trust me and accept that the entrenched forms of linear regimentation are not a pre-ordained necessity for effective teaching and learning – but that on the contrary, they often thwart sound pedagogical engagement. They would subsequently appear to understand and appreciate the re-design of the seating arrangements in the class. And, I must confess, this new 'architecture of democratic classroom design' was one of the aspects that most students, at the end of the five days of intense teaching, appreciated very much, as they would readily grant that they had been either encouraged by or supported by noticing how other students responded verbally and also bodily to the statements, interrogations and contributions of fellow students and the teacher.

Martha Farrell from PRIA in India acknowledged the tendency of discussions in their web-based courses toward dyadic exchanges between instructors and

students, and pointed to students' reluctance to pursue extended discussions with one another:

> *While the BBS* [online discussion space] *provided a shared environment for reflection, the difficulties in online communication were apparent. Some students participated and voiced their concerns rather actively; others remained silent, despite prompting from instructors. This was perhaps because relations between the course instructor and the students were more structured than amongst students themselves. A sense of community between the learners was missing. In the 'virtual classroom' it was difficult to judge whether students' lack of participation in class discussions was due to occupational commitments, or simply an oversight or act of negligence, lack of self-confidence, language, indifference or any other reason, including the fact that they could be silent spectators.*

These discussions of contextual differences were also revealing of some of the limitations participatory pedagogies. In response to David Kahane's affirmation of the value of giving students agency in the design, process and evaluation of their courses, for example, Alex Shankland, who works in Brazil, wryly pointed to the Portuguese word democratismo, which describes a setting with all of the trappings of democracy but no real democratic empowerment. As Kahane noted,

> *This particular exchange with Alex, and also the real risks some of my T&L colleagues took in bringing democratic methods into their classrooms, made a lasting impression. The rhetoric of 'democratic pedagogies' is so easy; yet making this real in the classroom is subtle and countercultural and really very difficult. This has been one of the biggest challenges presented to me by the T&L collaboration; I still wrestle with it.*

Out of these international exchanges about pedagogy arose questions about why we teach as we do, and about how our pedagogical pieties map onto the reality of our classrooms and our students' experiences.

There also was learning about the complex relationship between the democratic character of teaching spaces and that of surrounding political spaces. From the beginning we realised that there was wide variety in both our institutional cultures and our cultures of learning and teaching. Some institutions were more democratic and less hierarchical than others, and some classrooms more participatory than others. However, the relationship between institutional culture and participatory classroom cultures was often complex. In some contexts, such as Mexico, with histories of popular uprisings and institutions allied to radical social movements, students would bring their own experiences of activism and participation into the classroom, leading to highly politicised and participatory discussions. In other contexts, such as South Africa, where there were similar institutional alignments to pro-democracy movements, there would be the same level of politicisation in the classroom, but far less participation. We found that the relationship between institutional cultures and democratic teaching is by no means linear. Democratic institutions do not necessarily produce democratic classrooms and undemocratic institutions do not necessarily indicate diminished classroom democracy.

Even in the early days of the T&L group, when questions of democratising pedagogies were under discussion but not a focus of group activities, these themes took on new life in the iteration between group meetings and work in our home contexts. Once these themes were alive in our minds we started to see events in our classrooms differently, and could bring observations of interactions with our students back to our meetings. For example, John Williams at UWC structured his courses around empowering his students by giving them an acquaintance with a wide range of canonical texts in social and political theory. Without abandoning this goal, he started to listen differently to his students' encounters with these texts, and to open up to the possibility that this conceptual learning needed to be complemented by new forms of classroom activity. In his words,

> My discussion of the social contract, based on the works of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, elicited quite a lively discussion insofar as students viewed their own indigenous understanding of 'humanity' [ubuntu in Xhosa] as being on a par with, if not superior to, the Western notion of contract. For most of my students the expression umntu ngumuntu ngubantu entails the recognition that no individual is outside the web of humanity, as one's humanity is inextricably linked to the recognition of the humanity of another person; and it is precisely in this inescapable link to one another, within the chain of humanity, that one finds a sense of dignity, wellbeing, empathy and solidarity. Accordingly, for them, the notion of contract, as presented by Hobbes who advocates an authoritarian monarchy, Locke who proposes a liberal monarchy, and Rousseau who is in favour of liberal republicanism, is merely a different expression of this inherently African concept of ubuntu. When I allowed the students to contrast indigenous notions of contractual relationships in this fashion, their enthusiasm for my course literally became boundless.

Another impetus for discussions of power and participation in teaching and learning came from the focus of a minority of T&L group members on trainings for civil servants, elected officials and NGO workers. While in these contexts too there is a spectrum from more didactic to more participatory approaches, the default was toward more participatory and engaged methods that build on the experiential knowledge of participants. Such trainings also frequently involve questions not only about the authority and power of trainers, but how to deal with power differentials between students – for example, deference toward more senior officials, or domination of training sessions by more powerful participants. Idaci Ferreira noted that

> in Angola we bring to the training session about local governance, which involves local government and civil society groups, the experiences of the associations in their own words, exploring stories about the difficult relationship between groups and government, and difficulties of citizens participating in decision-making at the local level. This motivated lots of debate in an area very difficult to touch on, but stories from participants from associations were a powerful influence on discussion.

All of these dynamics shifted the collective focus of the T&L group toward teaching methods. Even members who were not advocates of participatory

pedagogies shared a commitment to recognising students as individual learners rather than as a generic group with homogeneous needs. This recognition in itself challenged hierarchies in classrooms where students 'have traditionally been schooled into passivity and didacticism' (Stackpool-Moore *et al.* 2006: 23). We spent a lot of time talking about how students can 'experience different ways of working for themselves' (Stackpool-Moore *et al.* 2006: 23). For many group members, our collaboration was an important catalyst for changed approaches and attitudes to student learners as well as to teaching methods.

A significant shift came when we devoted meeting time to modelling participatory methods for one another. At a workshop in 2009, for example, participants were asked to speak in plenary sessions about an innovative teaching practice that they had found important in teaching DRC themes. A vote then selected three methods to be modelled for 45 minutes each. Teams went away to prepare, with the stipulation that the person who had proposed the method had to equip someone else to model it. Three quite fascinating classroom methods were presented; one used in Indian trainings to enable workshop participants to take a stand on controversial issues with minimal risk; a process called the 'soft shoe shuffle', whereby Canadian students moved in space to indicate their shifting beliefs and positions as a discussion proceeded; and a practice used in a South African classroom to help students experience the democratic qualities of the spatial setup of the classroom in their first session.

This experiential learning about classroom methods not only made them tangible but gave an embodied sense of participating in or leading an exercise that could be carried back powerfully to one's own teaching context. As Martha Farrell from PRIA pointed out,

> *suddenly there were connections between the other work that we did and the issue of citizenship. I tried out a method that I use in gender sensitisation, which not only compels people to take a stand on controversial issues but also forces them to analyse their own thinking after hearing the perspectives of others. Learning styles and pedagogies remained the same, though the audience and theme varied.*

Collective reflection on classrooms as democratic spaces became a recurrent theme in our meetings, and insights from practice in the classroom circulated back into the T&L group. David Kahane, for example, wove reflection and engagement on questions of classroom power into his course on democratic theory and practice – including the subtle relations of power that undermine democratic practices in both public fora and the classroom. This reflection spurred one of his students to undertake a video project with peers about the internalisation of undemocratic educational habits, and the challenge of shifting these within the confines of any single course. This video was brought back to the T&L group, and inspired further discussion and reflection.[6]

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6   Video available at www.youtube.com/user/salvocucchiara.

As well as feeling challenged to bring new forms of experiential learning into the classroom, T&L group members developed a greater confidence using students' experiences as a learning tool. Many participants reported that they learned to be more democratic in dealing with younger colleagues and students. Laurence Piper said that

> I started off somewhat sceptical, but then I became more inclined to see the value of operating in a more inclusive way. When you bring the knowledge and skills of students into the classroom, it is so interesting, and it transforms the classroom into a much more productive and energised space; I've tried to be more participatory. Early on I treated students far too much as peers, as fellow academics. Now I start with 'what is your experience on this, and how does this relate to the topic'. Recently I taught a module in which I required students to interpret DRC material by applying it to a case that they selected from their own areas. So, for example we'd do a week on social mobilisation and then relate it to a case. One student from Cameroon talked about his experience of taking part in an anti-xenophobia march in Khayelitsha. This is experiential learning in terms of how we empower students, relying on their own expertise. The quality of discussions we've had around this has been incredible.

John Williams noted that

> the trajectory of my own epistemic experimentation, i.e. commencing with the canonical texts of Western thought, and then combining them with the orality of indigenous thought – knowledges passed on by the elders, and often carefully followed by present generations, especially those students hailing from rural settings – has been a profound pedagogical tool for me. Accordingly, for me, it is no longer the hegemonic Western text that matters, but to what extent my students can make sense of their own knowledge formations and contexts in the light of human thought, whatever its origin.

As T&L group members discussed challenges of democratising the classroom, we also talked about how to support students in breaking out of their habits and preconceptions about democracy both 'out there' and in classroom dynamics. Martha Farrell describes how this played out in the PRIA course:

> the process of teaching students in a distance mode has taught me to be more aware of the 'silent student' in a virtual setting. It is important that the facilitator reaches out to every person in the group to gain a diversity of perspectives, which build up a rich body of knowledge. Language too can become a barrier in a distance mode, as we are not aware of the comfort levels of the students with the language of instruction, and choice of words, terminology or pitch can cause students to feel insecure in expressing their thoughts and feelings or even in sharing experiences that could provide valuable insights for the entire group of learners.

Many T&L group members reported greater confidence and skills in facilitating a democratic classroom through an increased variety of methods. Laurence Piper from South Africa reflected that

the T&L collaboration has changed my sense of myself as a teacher. I have become much less of a traditional teacher. I am now more sensitive to the fact that students bring all kinds of knowledges that I do not have, and if you bring these into the classroom something enabling really happens. I am now much more open to using participatory methods in the classroom and I now have a better understanding of linking research to creative ways of teaching and action.

John Williams, meanwhile, observed that

allowing students to connect their relationships with their elders to their classroom discussions, for example, as a social contract between this generation and the previous one, and the high esteem with which they regard the practices and knowledge formations of previous generations, instilled in me the experiential sense of historicity of my students, something that is for my students at once personal and reflexive, current, but embedded in the very texture of their lives as they perform a range of solidaristic rituals to confirm these forms of epistemic heritage.

Even the very experienced teachers in the group found their approach to participatory pedagogies changed by the T&L collaboration. David Kahane reflected:

I came into T&L having won two national teaching awards, and with a lot of confidence in both the progressiveness and the effectiveness of the participatory teaching methods that I had honed. I am so much more attuned now to the potential gulf between democratic gestures in the classroom – for example, invitations to co-design the reading list and reshape it as the course proceeds – and student experiences of democratic agency or empowerment. I've come to see this dissonance between democratic forms and experiences of democratic agency as tremendously instructive: it serves as a resonant, immediate example and testing ground for analyses found in course readings and themes. It helps DRC and other materials come alive for students.

As T&L group discussions, and the teaching of many members, delved into participatory pedagogies, there were poignant challenges and questions about how to assess students' learning, and how we could know what in our teaching was working. Here, issues of classroom and institutional power relations came to the fore, and the impulse to involve students in reflecting on these power relations was broadly shared in the group. So discussion turned to participatory methods that could support student voices in moments of evaluation. Carlos Cortez experimented with using participatory video as a means to democratise evaluation:

In our university it is very participative, students have to prepare and participate. How does any theoretical discussion relate to students' own experience? – we emphasise this. What I tried is to leave the discussion very open, going from their experience to theory and back again; in this sense it is democratic as knowledge is collectively used; people have the freedom to agree and disagree. I even did an exercise first – a collective evaluation of the role of the coordinator. Each one does his or her own

evaluation. I had never done this – each one evaluates each other using participatory video. They chose a story, elaborated a video; this was more participative.

John Williams tried a different innovation:

I divide students into groups, and they are then allowed to complete particular assignments, often chosen by themselves, but clearly based on the course content. They are then encouraged to read about the assignment, and compare their reading materials to their experiential knowledges, current or past, of the topics in question. They are required to listen carefully to each group's presentation and express a position on these presentations and justify it based on their group's understanding of the topic, e.g. a 'contract' vis-à-vis the presentations of the other groups. They are encouraged to assign a grade to these individual groups and defend, rationally, why they have graded the groups in a particular way! This is usually the high point of the course as it indicates to me to what extent students have followed, understood and are able to apply new and related concepts and theories to their own contexts.

Martha Farrell shared the challenge in assessing assignments of students who were required to explore and analyse the issues of citizenship in a specific local context:

Assignments were an integral component of the course. The assignments encouraged them to reflect on the issue of exclusion/inclusion and analyse the relationships between social, economic and political factors on the praxis of citizenship, democracy and accountability. The challenge was to ensure that both the students and course instructors demonstrated a critical approach in analysing situations and contexts in order to understand the complexities of citizenship and the obstacles that they pose for the most marginalised and vulnerable citizens.

For David Kahane, the tensions between democratic commitments and forms on the one hand and actual empowerment of students on the other played out in evaluation as well:

I wanted students not only to reflect on how different assignments and grading practices affected their quality of learning and experience, but to collectively deliberate and decide about these things, so I started the term with a provisional assignment structure and invited students to propose changes. In the first round of my DRC-related course, no proposals came forward; later in the term, students were able to talk about that exchange, why they had such strong deference toward my choices, and what this said about the classroom and university as political spaces. In doing so they made explicit reference to themes and debates in the course readings. Out of this discussion, they designed participatory mechanisms – including my leaving the room while they deliberated on course requirements – that I was able to build into the second iteration of the course.

6 Impact of DRC materials on teaching

This paper has so far focused on the T&L group's ways of working and on how our collaboration came to reshape the methods we used to teach DRC materials. The materials themselves, however, also had powerful effects in our teaching and training. Here too our group learned a lot from contrasts between our contexts.

Contextual differences played out around core DRC concepts like citizenship. In contexts where learners had actual experiences of democratic citizenship, classroom discussion often focused more on legal definitions of citizenship and democracy, and less on the politics of negotiating citizenship. In contexts where democracy was more fragile, the term 'citizenship' had little public resonance – the initial focus of classroom discussions was often on the role of the state or on the wider politics of negotiation and contestation.

Some DRC themes resonated more in some contexts than in others. In the UWC MA course on citizenship and democracy, South African students focused on two core DRC themes: the building of new participatory institutions and the dynamics of social mobilisation. This reflected the wider political context in South Africa, with its relatively new democracy and the concomitant challenges of building new institutions and CSOs reflecting the interests of citizens. Here, selected DRC case studies such as those on new participatory governance institutions in Brazil and NGO mobilisation in Kenya and Bangladesh were especially useful. These themes are central to two of the DRC books. *Spaces for Change* (Cornwall and Coelho 2007) explores whether and how new invited spaces for citizen participation are places for significant change, and looks across spaces like health councils in Bangladesh and Brazil, local government institutions in India, and large-scale infrastructure development projects in Angola. It argues that these spaces have potential for revitalising democratic institutions that in turn may contribute to tangible development outcomes. *Mobilising for Democracy* (Coelho and von Lieres 2010) explores how citizen mobilisation contributes to the strengthening of democratic practices, institutions and cultures, and with it the ability of these institutions to be more responsive to development outcomes. According to Laurence Piper,

> *students generated remarkable insights through using the DRC model of participation and applying it to cases they themselves had chosen and using those cases to engage with theory. For example, one student had a light bulb moment when he realised that the reason why the cyclist lobby had failed to secure their goals was because they had been diverted into a disempowered invited space and needed social mobilisation to press their demands. So engaging with the theory helped him to understand his personal politics.*

In Mexico, doctoral students in a course on rural development engaged actively with some of the more theoretical introductions of two other DRC books. *Inclusive Citizenship* (Kabeer 2005) sets out to explore how poor people in

different contexts understand and claim citizenship, and the rights they associate with it. While the focus is largely on how these meanings and understandings differ from dominant ideas about citizenship, there are also important examples of outcomes that emerge from struggles for rights. These include dignity in Brazil, the provision of security and services for women in Bangladesh, housing and water in South Africa, and transformational empowerment in Bangladesh. *Citizenship and Social Movements* (Thompson and Tapscott 2010) examines the limits of participation through institutionalised forms of engagement and the role of mobilisation and social movements in winning rights and achieving development gains. Rather than seeing social movements as anti-state, it argues that they can also contribute to building more responsive and accountable states.

The conceptual and analytical frames offered by these and other DRC materials were powerful to students, even as the materials that resonated differed from place to place. Across many of our contexts, however, there was manifest value to students in reading about a wide range of democratic and citizenship struggles. John Williams from South Africa reflects that

> *My students are new to these concepts of citizen participation. Using DRC case study material from India on the nomadic movement in Rajasthan and how nomads claimed rights showed students that it is possible for rights to be claimed, not only conferred. The DRC case studies and participatory videos on the Zapatista movement, where the community can self-govern and make decisions, introduced a new idea to students – the possibilities associated with citizens being actively involved in decision-making processes. The DRC case studies from Brazil on citizen mobilisation around dams were also a wonderful example of how communities can actually stop local government and potentially change it. They show how communities need not be subsumed under the state, but can engage vociferously with government officials. It is very important to get material from other contexts. It makes us realise that while South Africans have their own problems, these problems cut across contexts and that problems are similar across the world.*

Students' comparative learning from DRC materials sometimes came from contrast between contexts. Alternatively, sometimes seeing familiar political dynamics played out in a very different setting made their contours clearer; or – as David Kahane emphasised – sometimes the different meaning and texture attributed to familiar concepts helped to show the particularity of interpretations that had seemed universal:

> *while it is important to know where our students are starting from, there's value in juxtaposition and in showing them different meanings – in their seeing that citizenship might be a much more politicised concept and experience than is typically assumed in Canada, for example. So DRC case studies were powerful in demonstrating to students that citizenship in Brazil, Nigeria and other places means something so different. My seminar on democratic theory and practice was enriched by this denaturalisation of our taken-for-granteds about democracy, and the quality of students' contributions in class and written work was manifestly stronger given this comparative orientation.*

At the same time, teaching materials and cases from such diverse contexts did pose challenges. Kahane went on to note that

> I struggled with how much cross-contextual diversity to include in my course, given dangers of dilettantism and shallow understanding; there is a real tension here. Students need to appreciate a political, social and cultural context deeply enough to learn from its nuances. In the first iteration of my course we looked at a wide range of DRC studies; in the second we chose to dig more deeply into Brazilian cases to allow deeper understanding of that context.

Nor were the challenges of contextual understanding restricted to students, as Martha Farrell from PRIA notes.

> My co-teacher Mandakini and I found that basic information at a global level was insufficient to guide the discussions on forms of citizenship and rights of citizens. When a student raised a discussion on Somalia and Somaliland, we had to read up more on the issue in order to take forward the discussion. It was truly a multidimensional learning process amongst all the participants – individual learners, learners as a body and instructors.

There also were contexts where a comparative orientation was found to be less useful, and where local materials were more resonant. Idaci Ferreira from Angola had this to say about ADRA's training courses:

> We used experiences from Angola that were researched by the DRC. The Nigerian case studies were good, but we did not have enough time to translate these, but the Angola examples we used a lot as a way of inviting people from the local associations to talk about their experience. The most important thing was to bring people together to talk about the subject of citizen engagement with government.

Even for Ferreira, though, there was important learning from struggles in other places – not in the trainings she ran, but in her own understanding of her situation:

> When I engaged and reflected with PRIA about action research it was very close to my reality. I also learnt about Bangladesh and about their grassroots groups. I can learn and use these experiences and reflections – it helps me to do things better.

Ferreira's remark brings out one other crucial dimension of DRC materials and their power in the classroom: with only a few exceptions, the case studies are from the global South, and interpreted and synthesised by Southern researchers. In some T&L courses these texts filled an important gap in curricula that are normally dominated by texts from the North, many of which fail to engage with new innovations from the South and remain locked in older, Northern-centric debates on policy development and governance. DRC material, largely drawn from recent Southern cases, provides contemporary examples of innovative policy and governance practices and the challenges associated with citizen participation. *Citizen Action and National Policy* (Gaventa and McGee 2010), for example, moves beyond local Southern case

studies and examines how citizens mobilise to effect pro-poor and pro-justice changes in national politics. This volume brings together cases that illustrate successful and significant examples of policy and governance changes that involved citizen engagement. Such materials act as important catalysts for South-South learning. As Laurence Piper explained:

> In the past I used mostly theories from the North in my teaching. DRC material brings theories from Southern contexts and speaks more effectively to our contexts. During the Pioneers workshop many South African public officials were very South Africa-centric and they often had a very technocratic view of the role of state and citizens. The effect of the Pioneers workshop was to get people out of their defensive modes and to develop a more sympathetic view towards citizens' rights.

Carlos Cortez pointed out that

> International comparisons in our courses focus mainly on the wider Latin American context. In the past we used mainly texts from academics in the North writing on Latin America. Using DRC materials exposed our students to the different perspectives of academics from within Southern countries. It is interesting for the students to think about the concepts they are using, for example rights through the perspectives of writers from the South. A lot of DRC material is much easier to understand.

DRC material includes many original empirical case studies from a broad spectrum of Southern situations. Learning about citizenship and democracy from such a diversity of perspectives was enriching for both teachers and students. Laurence Piper from UWC observed that

> my fourth year honours module was almost entirely DRC materials. Students really responded to case study materials and to cases from around the developing world. Not only because they were grounded in experience, but because other contexts were similar and different. The students felt like they were part of a global project when they were exposed to this kind of literature.

He also talked about using DRC materials in the Pioneers workshop with public officials:

> We had three resource people from India, Brazil and the UK. They gave examples for different contexts and these were very effective in that they gave a sense that these were innovative and important international practices and that this was not peculiar or freakish in the southern African context. Many participants related more to the stories from the African context. However, there was great value in being part of a broader movement reflecting on these issues and understanding that there is a tremendous variety of ways of going about citizen mobilisation and participation. There were many inspiring examples: the Homeless Women's Movement in Zimbabwe and citizen organisations in the refugee camps in the Sudan, for example. These gave a sense that there is an approach to governance that can work in both non-democratic and democratic contexts.

For some students and participants in trainings, then, the diversity of citizen-ship practices described in DRC materials enabled not only new thinking but new forms of action. As Carlos Cortez concluded, DRC materials helped to empower students to social action in their own environments by 'recognising other actions and possibilities, and learning from others'. He went on to describe how

> *one of our students was trying to establish community-based indigenous radio in a place where government is not allowing this. She was trying to do this based on the right to communication and the right to culture. Initially in her classroom presentations she was not interested in the discussions on citizenship and rights. By the end, she said that this would be very useful to relay to the group with which she worked. Two years later she can talk about how the programmes in the now running radio station deal with discussions of citizenship and rights. I really feel that this is the result of our work... an outgrowth of the course work and the discussions.*

So there are encouraging signs that DRC materials that were created using participatory and collaborative methods, and communicated to learners through participatory pedagogies, are shaping active forms of citizenship and participation.

7 Impact of T&L group activities on institutions

Many T&L group members saw impacts of their courses and trainings through changes in students' understandings and practices of citizenship, but the experience of developing and teaching DRC-informed courses also revealed how the form and content of this teaching pushed against institutional norms and practices. Most T&L group members came from universities, and wanted to find strategies for expanding participatory pedagogies and practices in their institutions, while knowing that relationships between faculty, administration and students in higher education institutions are difficult to change.

Stackpool-Moore *et al.* (2006: 14) argue that transforming universities requires that their elitist cultures be challenged, and that this challenge is badly needed:

> *Structural change in higher education institutions is essential if learning and teaching processes are to be personally transformative for learners and teachers, and are to contribute to positive social change through social learning. These structural changes in higher education include evolutions in curricula, degree requirements, admissions standards, teacher qualifications, promotion criteria, governance, and budget allocations.*

They recognise that international collaborations can play a vital role in providing supportive environments for educators to engage with and to address these challenges. In the now globalised system of higher education, where institutions compare themselves with each other according to standardised

criteria, it is often difficult for a single institution to change significantly on its own. International networking can offer the benefits of synergy and critical mass.

This argument about the value of international collaboration in supporting transformation in higher education institutions rings true with the experience of some T&L group members. They felt that participating in the T&L group gave them courage, agency and personal experiences to overcome barriers in their own institutions. At UWC, for example, the T&L collaboration helped foster a network of academics who challenged their parts of the university by getting new courses into the curriculum. This in turn opened new spaces for innovative teaching practices. John Williams said that

> what is important here, for UWC School of Government, is not only the introduction of a new course, or the revision of existing ones, but the willingness of the institution to allow faculty to experiment with co-teaching, co-examining and to determine grades based on a range of exercises, such as group work and assignments, individual exercises, individual reflections on plenary discussions, group reviews of video presentations, whereas before, most, if not all, assessments were strictly based on individual assignments.

To take another example, leadership of the T&L collaboration gave David Kahane the skills to take forward an innovative programme of research and reflection on how graduate student teaching assistants and instructors are supported and trained in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. In an institutional context where teacher training and support tended to be either absent or centralised, expert-led and regimented, he drew upon the T&L group's ethos and ways of working to implement a wide-ranging collaborative problem-solving exercise, oriented toward grassroots and peer-led teacher development.

These shifts in institutional culture, based on the influence and success of our first wave of courses as well as our ways of collaborating within the T&L group, opened up spaces and interest for more substantial initiatives in the form of new courses. As a result of our collaboration a number of new teaching programmes are planned for the future. These include an MPhil and PhD programme in Citizenship Studies at the UWC, a 12-month diploma course on Citizenship and Governance at PRIA, and an MA course based on DRC material at BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Action Committee) University in Bangladesh. The latter involves collaboration around joint curriculum design between researchers at BRAC University and the University of Toronto, highlighting the importance of networking and mutual learning across institutions as a potentially important catalyst for transformative changes in curriculum-building.

The T&L collaboration also led to transformative changes in NGOs. Martha Farrell from PRIA reflected that her participation in the T&L group encouraged her to play a new role in leading course development initiatives within PRIA. In turn, PRIA's collaboration with the T&L group boosted its own credibility as a knowledge provider – something many NGOs involved in course development

often struggle to achieve. In Angola, Idaci Ferreira's involvement with the T&L group 'changed ADRA's programme, both content-wise and in terms of training methods for public officials and local association leaders'. ADRA is now collaborating with Angolan academics to introduce its training programmes in action research into a university course. At IDS, other DFID-funded DRCs have picked up the idea of linking research to curriculum development. In addition, there were many other spinoffs:

● In India, PRIA introduced new course content based on DRC materials into one of its existing distance learning courses on leadership and governance.

● In Canada, the political theory graduate programme at the University of Alberta was reshaped with an emphasis on practical engagement, while at the University of Toronto, DRC materials were brought into a PhD course on the dynamics of global change.

● In the UK, DRC material was introduced into an MA course on democracy at IDS.

● In Angola, ADRA introduced the themes of democratic citizenship and citizen participation into existing training programmes for public officials and practitioners.

● In Mexico, DRC participatory videos were introduced as new teaching resources to help students reflect on course material at the National University.

● In South Africa, DRC material was introduced into an MA course on governance at UWC, and DRC research methods were introduced into the annual Africa-wide Council for the Development of Social Science research methodology seminar.

In all of these cases, the experience of T&L group members, combined with the success of the courses and trainings that they designed and delivered, enabled ripples of transformation to move across their institutions. In many cases, members were able to appeal to the global character of the collaboration and teaching and learning examples from other contexts in the T&L group to advocate for new kinds of courses and teaching. Perhaps most significantly, the willingness and skill to engage in these agendas of institutional transformation speak to the self-development of T&L participants through their collaboration: they had come to see themselves differently as citizens of their own institutions, and they had developed new capacities as agents of change.

8 What can be learned from the T&L group?

In some ways, the collaboration of T&L group members resists generalisation to other settings. With only three years of work behind it, the group is a relatively young and relatively small collaboration, spread over diverse contexts, so it does not support ambitious claims to replicability or scaling up. Furthermore, some elements of the T&L group's experience are atypical in the context of transnational teaching collaboration. The project emerged seven years into an intensely collegial research project, and built on strong relationships of trust and peer support, as well as shared purposes and values. It drew funding from this larger collaboration, and so had both strong resources and centralised administrative support for its work. The roots of the project in the DRC also meant that there was a shared archive of themes and materials that could be mined by members – allowing them to combine a shared focus with tremendous disciplinary and textual diversity. Yet despite all this, there are lessons – or at least hints – for other teaching collaborations.

First, the experience of the T&L group challenges expert-driven models of pedagogical development. The T&L group's collaboration was self-consciously built from the lay teacher's perspective: it centred on peer-to-peer reflection, learning and support. As such, it contrasts with approaches to teacher training centred on learning from experts, templates for course design and curriculum development, and best practice. This sort of peer-to-peer-driven teacher development is attracting increasing interest not only because of educators' desire to learn from each other but also because of the opportunities created by online network technologies and platforms, and the perceived cost efficiency of this approach relative to centralised, top-down methods.

A number of elements of the T&L group's approach are worth noting. Rather than applying some *a priori* account of good teaching to diverse contexts, it treated each member of the team as an expert on the contextual needs and challenges of their teaching, and built inductively from this local experience. The collaboration thus eschewed one-size-fits-all solutions, and encouraged openness to deep differences in cultural, political and institutional setting. This was especially important given the diversity within the group. More than this, however, the T&L group's inductive approach to learning how to teach citizenship in diverse contexts supported curiosity about one another's situations, and made these differences a source of real reflection and learning.

The basis of the project in peer learning and mentoring also undermined hierarchies of teaching expertise: all members were both learners and teachers in the collaboration, and were frequently shocked by these differences into an openness essential to experimentation and learning in teaching. Expert-driven models of teacher development and mentoring aim to build capacity in beginners, but reinforce a dichotomy whereby one is either a novice (needing correction, guidance and support) or an accomplished professional (having what it takes to guide others, and adequate to the challenge of teaching). The T&L group built a sense of teaching as a vocation of ongoing experimentation

and learning, which cultivated confidence in those newer to teaching while puncturing the pretensions of those with more experience. There were dramatic differences in levels of teaching experience in the DRC team and yet members listened raptly to one another's perspectives and challenges.

This argument resonates with DRC research about how discourses of empowerment and capacity building in development often mask stark limits to the potential of putatively democratic spaces to build real political agency. For example, facilitated and scripted invited spaces of participation often reinforce unequal relations of power between the conveners and the invited. As already noted, the peer learning focus of the T&L group echoed a fundamental commitment of many members to a pedagogy that sought to meet students where they were, to treat them as already possessing valuable knowledge from which others could learn, and to foreground and challenge habits of deference and hierarchy.

Second, transnational teaching collaborations involving higher educators can benefit from bringing in practitioners of other forms of teaching. It was important to the T&L group's process and learning that it brought together teachers developing university courses with those building trainings for civil servants, elected officials and NGOs. This kept key issues front and centre: how to bridge pragmatic questions and case studies with theory, how to calibrate the quantity and nature of readings to the capacities and dispositions of learners, and the proper place of participatory and didactic methods given different purposes and audiences. This bridging of very different contexts of teaching also allowed T&L group members to reflect on and get beyond pieties about empowering students and democratising learning, to really grapple with what it would take to make good on these ambitions in diverse contexts. It sharpened our attentiveness to the distinctive needs of our very different learners.

Third, T&L group members' collaboration as teachers was reinforced by their collaboration as researchers in the wider DRC. While this was distinctive to the particular trajectory of the T&L group's emergence from the DRC, it suggests that it is worth looking at how transnational teaching collaborations can be enriched by involving participants in common research – research geared not only to their own teaching and learning methods and outcomes, but to the broader social challenges and outcomes that provide contexts for their teaching.

Fourth, the project points to promising directions for transnational teaching collaborations. Many of these transnational projects – including others that are oriented toward citizenship education and democracy promotion – seek to develop a common curriculum that can be delivered in multiple contexts. By contrast, the T&L group sought to learn from the irreducible diversity of con-texts, without creating modules or courses that would travel from one to the other. The T&L group's aim was to support the self-development of teachers in and for their own local contexts.

Fifth, the T&L group was premised on a Southern focus and South-South collaboration. The prominence of content and reflection from the global South

enabled distinctive new learning, and sustained a focus on the interplay of pedagogical innovation with institutional and political capacities and challenges. As in the DRC as a whole, this Southern-focused collaboration and learning yielded new kinds of knowledge.

As this paper has sought to communicate, the T&L group's collaboration yielded important enhancements to curricula, courses and teaching methods. It also produced significant changes in the self-conceptions and teaching commitments of many participants given their experience of collaboration. As John Gaventa said in the final meeting of the T&L group,

> In my heart, I feel very proud hearing the testimonies of people from very diverse contexts using DRC materials. This was just a dream a few years ago... We took an idea, formed a group and then made something happen... The group has followed through and delivered on so many things.

Martha Farrell added that

> It was a great and rare opportunity to not only have this range of material from around the world, but to actually meet some of the people who were a part of the real life experience and who were instrumental in the writing of these stories.

The power of the T&L group's experiment in global teaching collaboration derives in important part from how the complex democratic exchange modelled by our collaboration can be supported, in turn, within our own teaching contexts. Idaci Ferreira, writing of her experience using DRC materials in trainings for officials in Angola, said that 'the value for us who work in the sphere of civil society is that there are very rich concrete cases that promote interaction among participants around their own experiences, amplify knowledge and raise consciousness'. John Williams at the UWC reflected that

> It is not when we are together in T&L that matters, but when we are alone in the classroom situation, facing eager students that seemingly want to learn: how does one tell students, so used to and immersed in the traditional banking concept of knowledge, that the knowledge that they bring into the classroom situation has as much validity as the texts that are filling the libraries of the world (not that the latter have all of sudden lost their import!). But, through the presence of a Mexican exemplar, the innovative training methodology of an Angolan colleague and the impetuous interruptions and clarifications of an Indian scholar, I have come to realise that in the web of life, we are all learners and teachers – and this singular, most important truth constitutes 'democracy-in-action' in the classroom.

T&L's formal, funded collaboration ended in 2010, but in addition to the enduring peer connections built through the project, it has inspired and empowered members to create new learning communities for themselves in their own contexts, not only with teaching colleagues but with their students. Our hope is that in sharing narratives and analyses of our collaboration we can expand these circles of peer dialogue and support both locally and globally.

Appendix 1 Detailed trajectory of the T&L group

Like many shifts in the DRC programme, the coalescence of interest around teaching first emerged around the edges of a group meeting, as six members had evening drinks after a day of meetings at Dunford House in the UK in March 2007, where the 'Deepening Democracy' DRC research stream was defining cross-cutting themes from early case study work. The initial focus on teaching DRC materials was as a form of dissemination: how could DRC materials get noticed and incorporated into teaching materials? But this group also started to see that a sustained collaboration around teaching and learning DRC materials could realise other goals. As the DRC looked ahead to the end of DFID funding in 2010 it focused on how to synthesise research themes, communicate them and increase their institutional effects. Drawing from DRC research for particular trainings and courses would *de facto* do this work of synthesis, communication and embedding, and would feed into broader reflection on themes and currents of the work. Furthermore, a key area of synthetic reflection in the DRC as a whole was on the forms of collaboration that had enabled the research. Creating a subgroup to collaboratively develop courses would not only provide a laboratory of collaboration, but invite reflection on how DRC themes about citizenship might cut across the internal process of the subgroup, the dynamics of our courses and the materials they were teaching.

Iterative learning in the DRC enabled responsiveness to new opportunities and information, and to new initiatives that captured members' energy. Out of the initial Dunford House discussion came email exchanges between colleagues in Brazil, South Africa, Canada and the UK about the scope of potential DRC work on teaching and learning, including about the degree of emphasis on content as opposed to pedagogy. These members began to think about a formal, funded DRC working group on teaching and learning, and identified co-conveners for the group (Kahane and von Lieres). Once funding was committed – in part through the serendipity of money left unspent at the end of a fiscal year – an email went around to the whole DRC membership in August 2007 seeking expressions of interest:

> At the March workshop of the Deepening Democracy team we decided to form a working group to explore curriculum development and teaching within the DRC. The goal is to collaboratively produce course materials and pedagogies to communicate what we've learned in the DRC to higher education and training audiences, using materials and case studies that we have produced, together with key external material.

> We would like to gather a team to take this funded project forward, and so are extending an invitation to this network. Participation would involve active involvement in e-conferences and meetings, and in many cases the development of a course that you would teach in your own context, and/or participation in co-teaching initiatives.

Initial steps of the work would include:

(1) An e-conference where we will brainstorm together about the shape of the curriculum project, and form working groups that will go on to (i) assemble theoretical and case study materials; (ii) discuss pedagogies that would model the approaches to participation being studied; (iii) determine supports that should be offered for those taking up this curriculum; and (iv) investigate possibilities for teaching collaborations such as DRC researchers teaching together at each other's institutions, or a summer school based on DRC material and involving DRC Researchers.

(2) Working groups to get underway in preparation for a January workshop.

(3) A two-day face-to-face workshop to develop and consolidate our DRC curriculum project.

Please be in touch with David or Bettina if you think that you might want to be part of this initiative. Some selection may be involved in assembling the team so that we have broad geographical representation, varied kinds of teaching and course development experience, and expertise in the range of conceptual, applied and pedagogical issues and literatures with which we'll be dealing. Participants should also commit to testing an idea in practice.

It is worth dwelling on these beginnings of the T&L group, since they both echo and diverge from the beginnings of the DRC itself. First, echoing the DRC, there was a commitment to starting from where people were. Rather than inviting people to sign up for an initiative with clear contours, people enrolled to establish a direction and path together. At the same time, in contrast with the DRC, this group had been working together successfully for years, and they already had comradeship, shared values and trust. These translated into a confidence that collaboration would serve our respective needs.

There were also established DRC forms of collaboration for the group: the appointment of co-conveners, e-conferences to prepare for face-to-face meetings, and a common vocabulary of meeting and facilitation processes. The T&L group could quickly build upon these through further process experimentation and learning. For example, while the co-conveners picked up the structure of collaboration whereby meetings were preceded by e-conferences, in light of the drop-off in participation observed in earlier iterations they staged the conversation around successive sets of themed questions and encouraged very brief responses.

The October 2007 e-conference aimed to prepare the ground for a two-day meeting in January 2008 in Delhi, which was grafted onto an existing DRC governance meeting that already included a number of T&L group members. In the e-conference, we each framed the teaching challenges we faced in using DRC materials, and reflected on how collaboration could advance our practice. Responses ranged from the content-focused, to a desire to gain teaching skills, to a concern about how to align pedagogies with DRC content. At this stage, all of the courses and trainings were prospective – either entirely new initiatives or major revisions of existing teaching to include DRC materials. A large group of

participants and courses were in the mix during the initial e-conference and the subsequent meeting in Delhi; those detailed in this paper are those that continued with the collaboration through subsequent stages.

The Delhi meeting was held for two days at the PRIA offices. It began by acknowledging and appreciating the diverse teaching and learning contexts represented in the group. Participants agreed that this diversity was a strength, enabling them to coach and challenge each other, explore ways of linking students and teachers, and use diverse case studies from the global South. They also identified possible challenges, for example institutional resistance to different content and pedagogies, and the need to address students with different needs and expectations. They heard from a panel of Indian academics who emphasised the value of spaces that enabled honest discussion of the politics of teaching. Much of the meeting was then spent brainstorming key themes and reflecting on what it would look like to teach courses premised on 'seeing like a citizen' – a phrase used to identify the DRC approach to its research. At this early stage the group envisioned three parallel teams, divided between university-based courses, distance learning and training courses for public officials, and a champion was identified for each. A fourth possible group that would have looked at teaching and learning citizenship directly with communities was left aside at this point for lack of a champion. Each group was to identify learning goals and themes, select and/or develop materials, decide on pedagogies, develop evaluative tools, decide how to document the course, develop peer support mechanisms and begin publicising the courses.

The Delhi meeting was the first of several that dovetailed with other DRC gatherings – an efficiency that allowed the T&L group to meet, but also meant multiple, sometimes overwhelming, demands on people's time. Part of the difficulty of sustaining T&L group members' engagement, especially between meetings, was the sheer busyness of participants. Other groups were also longer established and more intensive in their work – and offered financial support for participation – so T&L group activities often took a back seat to other demands. Challenges in sustaining active participation between meetings may also have related to a dynamic familiar to many at universities: the devaluation of teaching development relative to research production. This returns us to the dialectic referred to above between energy raised by face-to-face meetings and the weight of institutional norms and expectations back home.

A small group of participants in the three streams met alongside a DRC gathering in Monkey Valley, South Africa in May 2008 and planned another major e-conference for the following month. The content of this online process marks a decisive shift to concerted engagement with issues of pedagogy. In the first two-day phase of the e-conference, participants emailed the group responding to the following questions:

(1) What are your central teaching goals in delivering your course (or if you don't yet have a particular course, the genre of course you're considering)?

(2) What key challenges will you and your students face as the course proceeds? (Here you may talk about challenges like sustaining interest and

engagement among participants; connecting theory and practice; supporting students in doing tough readings; getting all participants active in discussion; evaluating student progress; working in difficult classroom spaces or with difficulties of online access; limited student preparedness.)

(3) What teaching methods have you used before that will be important in meeting these challenges? What new teaching methods are you considering, and why?

In its second stage, the e-conference moved to an online threaded discussion. The co-conveners drew a number of themes out of the first round and invited exchanges under these headings and others added by participants.

In a third stage, a new question was posed: does teaching about DRC themes demand something different of our teaching methods? This reflected issues that had come up in both Delhi and Monkey Valley, and interrogated the extent to which teaching about democracy entails modelling democracy in teaching methods, and the contradictions involved in using traditional lecture models to teach about democracy. For most or all of us, passion for the work of the DRC was based on a commitment to principles and values of democracy. We were beginning to ask whether teaching these principles and values requires them to be embodied in courses and trainings, in the agency students are given to define the terms of their own learning, in the authority given to participants' own perspectives and voices, and in the responsiveness of teaching methods to student input. In other words, we were asking what happens to our democratic sensibilities when we enter the spaces where we teach? Do we affirm forms of authority, expertise, or hierarchy in our teaching that we challenge in our political analyses? And are we justified in doing so? These are provocative questions, and ones that can reveal a lot about our understandings of democracy and of teaching.

The fourth stage of the e-conference asked:

(1) What do you hope and plan to do around teaching methods as you develop and deliver your course?

(2) What kind of support from the rest of us would be useful to you in doing this?

(3) Is there anything that the experience of this e-conference should teach us about how we collaborate, and/or about emailed and online discussion as ways of learning?

This e-conference set up a three-day gathering at Stanmer House in the UK in October 2008, at which time the group's work became very practical. Conversations about teaching DRC materials focused on particular teaching goals and contexts. Participants shared both syllabi and reflections in advance of the meeting and received critical feedback. Half a day was spent stepping back and rebuilding syllabi from scratch – articulating course and learning goals and mapping the thematic structure of the course. This was followed by a 'library exercise' that supported participants in browsing the archive of DRC research products and sharing what they found most useful for their teaching purposes.

The work also became more practical by turning from broad questions of democratising pedagogy to modelling particular classroom practices that members thought useful in teaching and learning DRC themes and materials. Attention was also directed at collaborative methods in the workshop – noticing nuances, strengths and challenges of different sessions and trying on different facilitation roles. This was the first overt reflection of an aspiration that many had held for the T&L group from the beginning: that it would reflectively model resonances between learning in the group and the learning members were trying to facilitate in their classrooms and trainings.

At Stanmer House meeting members also recommitted to collaborating at a distance between meetings, especially as many of the courses were now beginning: those teaching courses would post to a discussion board after each class,[7] noticing something that had gone well, something that was challenging, something that surprised them and something they intended to do differently in future. Others would go to the website often enough to offer support and critical feedback. We left the Stanmer House meeting charged up for our own teaching, and for communicating closely and supporting one another as our courses and trainings unfolded.

Several members did use the Ning site as planned. But ongoing virtual collaboration was difficult to sustain. The Ning site never reached a critical mass of activity that rewarded those who posted regularly and convinced others that they were missing something valuable. As in the DRC as a whole, the movement of T&L group members from their local contexts to face-to-face meetings and back did have its generative aspects, but given its focus on innovation in our teaching practices, the absence of day-to-day peer support and mentoring was a real obstacle. Members' existing teaching practices are held in place not just by institutional constraint or lack of experience of alternatives, but by deep habits of mind and heart. It takes an equally weighty practice of individual and collective experimentation, reflection and encouragement to make significant changes; and this is what the group found tough to implement at a distance. Moreover, the T&L group was much smaller than most other DRC teams, convened less frequently, and had one or at most two individuals from any given institution, so face-to-face support could be thin.

The reasons offered for limited participation in online dialogue were predictable and real: in some contexts, web access was intermittent and difficult; members were all tremendously busy and virtual collaboration took time; and members' institutions didn't reward this investment of time. We suspect, though, that there were more interesting reasons for the difficulty of distance collaboration, perhaps including members' own undervaluing of teaching relative to research, and their investments in current habits of teaching.

Seven university courses and four trainings for officials took place in the year following October 2008, with a fair amount of exchange and reporting back along the way, including an e-conference (focusing on materials used, teaching

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7   After much consideration of online collaborative environments, the group settled on www.ning.com.

methods and course evaluations) and a collaboration with the 'Learning and Teaching for Transformation' virtual network in May 2009, where members of the T&L group described their courses and key challenges, feeding into discussion with this wider network.

Our third major face-to-face T&L group meeting took place for three days in October 2009 at Dunford House in the UK. This meeting had three main tasks: to allow comprehensive reporting back and reflection based on the courses taught; to support planning for our remaining year of DRC-funded work, including comparative learning and research products from our courses; and to think about whether we had ambitions to sustain our collaboration beyond the end of the DRC. Participants shared draft reflection pieces in their courses in advance of the meeting, and the meeting itself involved rich exchange around our courses, framed in terms of dimensions of the teaching that felt risky or surprising, and inviting intensive collaboration on continuing challenges within and across particular courses. It was also a chance to share videos of our courses that some of us had made.

At previous meetings, members had discussed particular teaching methods, explored their applicability in one another's contexts, and explored their consonance with DRC themes and commitments. This Dunford House meeting responded, though, to members' strong sense that *experiencing* others' innovative methods would make it more likely that we would have the courage and capacity to experiment with these in our own teaching spaces. The better part of a day was spent explicitly modelling innovative teaching methods that we had used in connection with DRC materials. This took place in a way that also expressed our resistance to hierarchies of expertise in teaching: while some of the methods came from more experienced members in our group, we decided that they would be modelled by others who were briefed by the person who broached the particular method. Energised by this actual experience of new teaching methods, the group dug more deeply into cross-cutting themes and successor projects using an 'open space' format.[8] Laurence Piper reflected that the meeting at Dunford House 'was a very positive experience as there was real peer-to-peer sharing of methods that we use in our classes. This brought us together as participants. It was not about expertise, but about doing things together'.

Our final T&L group meeting was part of the last gathering of the DRC in Rajasthan, India in August 2010. At this meeting Martha Farrell said that

> I come from an activist background, and initially I was scared to interact with researchers and academics. I listened more than talking in the beginning. But this collaboration really helped me to develop my new role – leading PRIA's continuing education department. I supplemented my old skills as a trainer with new ones – teaching and building new courses on citizenship.

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8   www.openspaceworld.org/

From this last meeting came a commitment to continue. While DRC funding has ended, PRIA has committed to hosting a web space in which the team can continue to interact and support one another in teaching collaboration. And we hope that readers of this paper will connect with us around their own initiatives to teach citizenship and democracy by doing.

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