Using Storytelling to Integrate Faith and Learning: The Lived Experience of Christian ESL Teachers

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Abstract

English as a second language (ESL) settings lend themselves more easily and naturally than others to storytelling-based discussions and activities that integrate faith and learning. Stories and storytelling offer students from diverse backgrounds a compelling mechanism for understanding their world and creating shalom learning community conducive to the restoration of wholeness of the learners. This qualitative study explores the perceptions and lived teaching experience of Christian teachers regarding the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings through using storytelling. Findings indicated that storytelling is an effective tool for the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings. Using storytelling in ESL settings helped the participants and their English language learners know themselves, develop Christian thinking, promote social justice, and foster mutual understanding.

Introduction

The population of students who speak a language other than English at home is presently one of the fastest growing student populations in the United States. Pino (2008) stated that enrollment of English as a second language (ESL) has increased 150% between 1989 and 2005 to more than five million students. These English language learners (ELLs) come from different cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Content area teachers with ELLs in their classrooms and ESL teachers find it difficult to choose appropriate teaching tools that can accommodate the diverse academic, linguistic, cultural, and spiritual needs of their ELLs. It is also challenging for Christian teachers who want to integrate faith and learning in their instruction. ELLs are used to hearing and telling stories in their first language and culture.

Throughout the globe, people tell stories to their children and grandchildren. Greene (1996) asserted, "Stories have been told as long as speech has existed, and sans stories the human race would have perished, as it would have perished sans water" (p. 1). Storytelling is universal, perhaps the dominant form of discourse (Bruner, 2002). Humans are most certainly a storied people and stories can be seen as living entities of human existence (Milton, 2004). Through use of stories and storytelling, ELLs with different beliefs and cultural and religious backgrounds can live together in harmony. Stories and storytelling offer students from different linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds a compelling mechanism for understanding their world, expressing themselves to others, and connecting with their culture as well as others' cultures. Shirley (2005) defined storytelling as, "a communicative device that requires the teller and listener to interact as transmitters and receivers of thoughts and ideas" (p. 10). In the context of this study, storytelling is defined as a means of communication that requires tellers and listeners to exchange and combine their experiences and build connections and associations.

Theoretical Framework

The following four theological, philosophical, and theoretical propositions summarize the frame for this research. These four themes are developed more fully in the literature review that follows.

Storytelling and the Integration of Faith and Learning

Christian teachers and teacher educators should use a variety of techniques and strategies to integrate faith and learning in their subject areas. According to Holmes (1993), the integration of faith and learning in Christian schools is a divine imperative. Faith-based colleges and universities should integrate faith and learning to equip teachers for ministry (Higginbothan, 1998), help restore the balanced image of God in students (Knight, 1998), and educate the students in an integrative fashion to the end that faith touches every area of their

thoughts and lives (Holmes, 1987). In defining the integration of faith and learning, educators, theologians, and academic practitioners used a variety of terms such as: integration of faith and learning, transformational learning, and having a Christian worldview. According to Nwosu (2003), these definitions can be grouped around intellectual, lifestyle, and discipleship categories. Hughes (2001) defined the integration of faith and learning as a concept that encourages making Christian values a part of learning and introducing these values into curriculum development in different programs and disciplinary. For the purpose of this study, the integration of faith and learning is defined as truth-searching in depth through telling and listening to stories.

In the faith-related instruction, Christian teachers should use their subjects to help their students think creatively and independently. Traditional stories have been used as a primary means to teach Christian theology for a long time. Kim (2005) argued that when we use Christian stories, we can appropriate Christian faith and reconstruct our personal and communal identity as Christians. After experiencing the power of storytelling Lee (1993) described how storytelling managed to help a group of people who were essentially strangers become one. Responding to the Christian mandate to have the mind of Christ, different Christian educators use different approaches to the integration of faith and learning. These approaches include, but are not limited to, the attitudinal, ethical, foundational, worldview, and pedagogical approaches. Although the pedagogical approach is the main approach used in the present study, other approaches such as the attitudinal and foundational approaches are also utilized in integrating faith and learning through using storytelling in ESL settings. Our life is a story and our knowledge comes in the form of stories. Integrating faith and learning through using storytelling enriches people's lives. Stories include themes that clarify the reality of life and world to listeners. As Christians, we learn about the truths of our lives and the structure and content of Christian faith through stories. This reflects the theology of storytelling.

Toward A Theology of Storytelling

The Bible is full of stories of how God interacted with people. Navonne (1990) stated, "Jesus Christ has come to tell and be the story of redemption and reconciliation" (p. 183). Religions and spiritual people seek to tell their religious and spiritual experience within the framework of a story. Kim (2005) stated, "One beauty of storytelling is that it can open a space for the Holy Spirit to enter and join in the telling and listening of the story" (p. 1). Theology can be studied in many ways. It can be studied and defined from the narrow perspective, which reflects most precisely the etymology of the term and properly means "the study of God". It can also be defined with a much broader focus in mind, which refers to a system of dogma, i.e. the correlation of a unified system of thought and doctrine pertaining to matters of God, creation, and human existence of which the Scriptures are the foundational deposit of truth. Theology is the framework within which one seeks to give expression to one's experience and faith. For Ariarajah (1977), all theology is "storytelling". Macky (1986) described how Mark's story of Jesus' Sabbath healing of a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6) is story theology. It is obviously a story because it has characters, action, setting, conflict, and results. It is theology because from the larger context, we know that Mark presents Jesus as God's authoritative agent, the one whose words and actions reveal God's character, intentions, and involvement in human life. I adopted Tracy's (1977) public theology that "articulates the transformative possibilities of a particular cultural heritage or a particular social, cultural, or political movement to a wider pluralistic society" (p. 92).

There is a consensus among Christian theologians that truth is holistic in nature and has its source in God because God is the truth. As Christian believers, we seek to make meanings of our true life story through making meaning of the story of Jesus Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The theology and significance of using stories in teaching and ministry is confirmed in the writings of many Christian writers and theologians. Macky (1986) asserted that story theology is the way of speaking about God by telling stories about Him. Tilly (1995) argued that stories can teach Christian theology more effectively than doctrine or dogma. Navonne (1990) suggested that John's theology of the Word of God is an implicit theology of story. McFague (1975) offered an active theology of story and discussed the use of story in making theological statements. She argued that when the story is heard, the listeners lose control of familiar

ordinaries of the story of their life and see another story—another way of believing and living. In this paper, theology refers to our speech and thought (logos) about God (theos), what we believe about Him, how we identify Him. A theology of story, in this paper, refers to the foundation for the narrative process used in storytelling to help make connection with faith and learning. We are deeply touched when we hear others' stories in which God has touched their lives or entered into their experiences. Stories of God's coming, caring, and challenging can involve hearers in such a way that they are touched, given insight, and stimulated to respond in faith to God's presence. The revelation of personal lives in stories activates the personal involvement of the listeners. They create new context for their lives and explore new possibilities for living. This leads to a kind of transformation in their attitudes, ethics, values, and behaviors that enables them to live in harmony with themselves and others.

Storytelling and Learners' Transformation

Storytelling has been used as a tool for transformation. In describing integrating faith and learning, Whilhoit (1991) used the term "transformational learning," which encompasses the overall perspective individuals acquire when they learn in an atmosphere open to God's direction and seek to find meanings that are centered in God. Storytelling improves human social interaction and brings us together (Kuyvenhoven, 2009; Maier & Fisher, 2007; Shirley, 2005; Xu, Park, & Baek, 2011), makes us aware of our racism (Bell, 2009), restores tellers and listeners to a sense of shared humanity (Dlnkler, 2011), enhances positive relationships, cohesion, and adaptability (Kellas & Trees, 2009), creates self-concept and identity claims (Daiute, 2004; Zacher, 2006), and transmits knowledge, culture, values, and behaviors (Erickson, 2008; Milton, 2004; Ross, 2008). Teachers can use storytelling to meet a variety of students' cognitive, social, and emotional needs. For the context of this study, transformation is defined as a planned, intentional change in the storytellers' and listeners' attitudes, ethics, values, and behaviors that enables them to build a shalom learning community in the classroom with students from diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. When appropriately used in the classroom, storytelling can help students understand their world, construct a sense of self, actively

participate in their culture, and accept others' cultures.

Storytelling is a process that has the power to transform hearers and tellers as well as the world in which they live. One of the most famous transforming stories is from the Old Testament when the Lord sent Nathan to David with the story of two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. We see how the story ended with the transformation of David when he said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:1-13). Stories are identity-shapers for both listeners and tellers. Sharing stories from different cultures in culturally and linguistically diverse settings can enhance the learners' transformation. Using biblical stories can help the learners to identify God and come to know who God is. Storytelling can mediate meaning, encourage sharing, and strengthen the relationship among the listeners of the story. Storytelling is developmentally appropriate for linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse students. It can be used in ESL settings to help students decide who they are, determine their values, perceptions and behaviors, and guide them in dealing with and creating daily experiences. Using storytelling in the classroom contributes to the students' sense of self and, simultaneously, increases their understanding of the world around them. Through the act of storytelling, teachers and students become able to tell their story, hear each other's story, connect home, school, and community stories, and use this understanding to enhance their skills of adaptation and transformation.

Storytelling and Language Learning

Storytelling as a pedagogical strategy is not new or unique. In ESL settings, many language teachers consider storytelling the cornerstone of their teaching profession. They use stories to enhance ELLs' abilities to acquire and integrate the four language arts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and raise their cultural awareness. Storytelling is beneficial in teaching and learning languages. Using storytelling in ESL settings enhances the language teaching and learning process as well as the learners' process of transformation.

Findings of studies utilizing storytelling showed that storytelling improved students' listening comprehension, (Neugebauer & Currie-Rubin,

2009; Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007), improved students' reading comprehension and inferential skills (Craig, Hull, Haggart, & Crowder, 2001), built vocabulary (Bishop & Kimball 2006; Kuyvenhoven, 2009; Neugebauer & Currie-Rubin, 2009), developed oral language skills (Neuman, 2006; Sadik, 2008), improved students' writing skills (Ballast, Stephens, & Radcliffe, 2008; Gakhar & Thompson, 2007), enriched students' learning experience (Xu, Park, & Baek, 2011), encouraged students to express their ideas and thoughts (Lee, 2005; Shin & Park, 2008), helped students develop competence with print literature (Roney, 2009), empowered students' critical and visual thinking (Gakhar & Thompson, 2007; Myatt, 2008), and enhanced the integration of language skills (Egan, 2005; Sadik, 2008; Tsou, Wang & Tzeng, 2006). The process of storytelling is enjoyable for both classroom teachers and students. It emphasizes a positive, collaborative, and supportive classroom climate. It decreases the students' affective filter and encourages their imagination and cooperation. Using storytelling in ESL settings improves learners' general language proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Storytelling is effective in fostering diversity in the classroom of students from different cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. It enhances global networking by increasing the awareness and understanding of cultural differences.

Research Method

In this study a qualitative, phenomenological perspective seemed better suited to provide a framework for yielding deeper understandings of the meaning attached to the perceptions and lived experience of Christian teachers in ESL settings.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions and lived teaching experience of Christian teachers regarding the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings through using storytelling. Consequently, the study was derived by the following research questions:

1. What does the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings mean?

2. How do Christian teachers perceive the influence of using storytelling in ESL settings?

3. How do Christian teachers integrate faith and learning by using storytelling?

4. How does the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings through using storytelling help ESL teachers and ELLs beyond the classroom?

5. How can Christian teacher education institutions better prepare ESL teachers for the integration of faith and learning in their ESL settings?

Sampling and Data Collection Protocol

To increase the utility of information obtained from the participants of this study, I used a purposive sample of eight graduate Christian teachers, who volunteered to discuss their perceptions and lived teaching experience in ESL settings. The participants were Christian graduate students in one of my ESL classes seeking ESL certification and/or a master's in education. They were either ESL teachers who are teaching English in ESL settings or content area teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms. Based on the nature of this qualitative study, I used a semi-structured focus group interview and three key informant interviews as the primary data collection instruments to engage the participants in a face-to-face dialogue about their lived teaching experience in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. I used open-ended questions, which led to further discussions among participants as well as further in-depth exploration of their lived teaching experience. In developing and conducting this study, I used an ethical framework as recommended in the qualitative research literature. This ethical framework included participants' rights, protection of privacy, and confidentiality issues (Glesne, 2006).

Data Credibility and Trustworthiness

Although data retrieved from the focus group is evidenced-based (Levers, 2006), I took some measures to ensure the utility, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the study findings. To enhance the relevance and credibility of the present study, I used audio-taping, note-taking, and observations to ensure accuracy in recording data. I used triangulation and member-checking techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to enhance the credibility of the study. I established triangulation of data through using the digital audiotapes, notes, observations, review of related literature, and member check-ins. Each of the five main categories

of themes that emerged from the collected data was triangulated by confirming that data had been collected from different participants and through different methods (i.e., focus group interview session, key informant interviews, member-checking, and note-taking). I used the field notes, which I took along with the interview, to describe observations such as participants' body language, tone of voice, environmental distractions, contextual factors, changes in physical condition and comfort (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000). To ensure the research credibility or internal validity in this study, I bracketed my assumptions, which were related not only to participants' responses but to the language they used. To protect the validity of the study results, I engaged myself in persistent observation, which required prolonged engagement in the material during data analysis methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The perpetual review of related literature has helped me to ensure the relevance of the research questions. With issues of trustworthiness and sensitivity in mind, actual data analysis became possible. To achieve the sensitivity of the study findings, I used the relevant literature and my personal experience to inform the analytic process.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the collected data and describing the units of meaning, I used Patton's (2002) reflexivity. The formal data analysis continued throughout the project until no new themes emerged from the data and until the emerged themes constituted an integrated description of the participants' ESL lived experiences. I considered the analysis complete when I reached Glasser and Strauss's theoretical saturation (as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 1995). That is when I was no longer able to identify more new themes. I compared my overall impressions to the initial codes that were noted throughout the research process, and I formulated the preliminary findings. Then, I compared these preliminary findings to the data with a final read through, with special attention paid to disconfirming evidence. After that, I used my earlier observations, my personal experiences, and the knowledge I have gained from the literature to reflect on the emerged units of meaning to entail the transformation of participants' everyday expressions into psychological language with emphasis on the lived ESL teaching experience of integrating faith and learning through using

storytelling. Finally, I synthesized and integrated the insights contained in the transformed meaning units into a consistent description of the lived ESL teaching experiences of the participants. I used the cross analysis of the emerging themes and patterns in the focus group interview and key informant interviews along with observations and the field notes to generate "thick descriptions" of the data, and thereby, of the lived ESL lived teaching experiences of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Findings and Discussion

Using open-ended questions in the focus group interview and the three key informant interviews in this study allowed me to exercise some flexibility in addressing issues that were not anticipated before data collection and allowed the participants to choose the direction they wanted to respond from, provided them an opportunity to answer from a broader perspective, and gave them freedom to talk about their daily lived teaching experiences. The participants in this study were able to answer most of the interview questions without formal prompts. In a few cases, I had to ask more specific open-ended questions and use some prompts to supplement the main questions of the interview protocol and encourage the participants to elaborate and give more details about their lived teaching experiences. Using the semi-circle setting for the focus group discussion and asking the participants to respond to all questions in the same turn made it easy for me to observe the process and take field notes about each participant, which were helpful throughout the data analysis stage. In addition to being an active listener throughout the session, I took field notes to supplement the interviews transcripts (noting physical gestures or mannerisms), as well as documenting any early emerging themes that might lead to follow up investigation.

The collective responses of individuals gathered across the focus group discussion yielded a set of common themes and thus provided insight into the participants' perceptions and perspectives of their lived teaching experience of using storytelling to integrate faith and learning. The emerged constructed meanings were organized under five major categories: (1) Perception of the Integration of Faith and Learning, (2) Influence of Using Storytelling, (3) The Know-how to Integrate Faith

and Learning, (4) Faith Application, and (5) Needs and Expectations.

Category I: Perception of the Integration of Faith and Learning

Research Question 1 asked, "What does the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings mean?" The participants responded in turn and each provided a response to the question. Participant 1 described the integration of faith and learning (IFL) as the development of the whole person (spiritually, morally, socially, culturally, and emotionally." Participant 2 said, "IFL is the inclusion of the whole person (heart, soul, and mind) in all learning activities, thinking, feeling, studying, deciding, and interpreting." Participant 3 stated, "IFL encompass the culture, ethos, and environmental setting in which learners from different cultures interrelate." Participant 4 said, "IFL is a call to social response that helps develop the concept of 'thinking in a Christian way' in an attempt to transform the way the learners think and act in a multicultural setting." Participant 5 added, "IFL is the understanding of human nature, human value, and human potential through the light of biblical truth." For Participant 6, "IFL is the establishment of shalom and justice in the diverse classroom and enabling students to reach their full potential and flourish in multicultural settings." Participant 7 stated, "IFL is working towards reducing tensions between ethnic groups, supporting antiracism, and fighting discrimination in multicultural settings." Participant 8 described IFL as, "the process of increasing awareness of how our actions, decisions, and lifestyles affect other people."

The meaning of integrating faith and learning in ESL settings focused around creating a supportive environment that reduces tensions between ethnic groups and fights discrimination in multicultural ESL settings. It is developing the whole person. This confirms Holmes' (1987) idea of educating the students in an integrative fashion to the end that faith touches every area of their thoughts and lives. For the participants, integrating faith and learning is establishing shalom learning community in the diverse ESL classroom and enabling students to thinking in a Christian way. This conforms to Hughes' (2001) definition of the integration of faith and learning as a concept that encourages making Christian values a part of learning and introducing these values into curriculum development in

different programs and disciplinary. As a Christian educator, I believe that the integration of faith and learning is a life-long process. Therefore, Christian ESL teachers should foster faith-based learning communities in their classes. Storytelling can be used to equip ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to discover themselves, accept each other, and resolve their conflicts.

Category 2: Influence of Using Storytelling

Research Question 2 asked, "How do Christian teachers perceive the influence of using storytelling in ESL settings?" The participants responded in turn and each provided a response to the question. Participant 1 said, "Storytelling can help ELLs and teachers know and discover and reveal themselves to others." Participant 2 said, "Storytelling can promote respect for human diversity and enable students to learn about cultures and values different from their own." Participant 3 stated, "Storytelling enhances the students' ability to gain insight into other cultures and socio-cultural beliefs." Participant 4 said, "Storytelling can enhance the socialization of ELLs when the stories deal with personal experiences, social relationships, thoughts, and feelings." Participant 5 added, "Storytelling contributes to the learners' personal and social development since many multicultural stories represent a variety of social groups, values, and customs." For Participant 6, "Storytelling can help create a relaxed and intimate classroom atmosphere where the students can make and keep friends." Participant 7 stated, "Storytelling can help ELLs to understand and appreciate their own culture, as well as other cultures." Participant 8 concluded, "Storytelling contributes to social justice by affirming cultural diversity and fostering understanding and acceptance of different languages and values."

The participants' perceptions and lived experience of the influence of using storytelling in ESL settings indicated how effective storytelling was in transforming both teachers and students. The transformational dimension of using storytelling conforms to Tracy's (1977) public theology that "articulates the transformative possibilities of a particular cultural heritage or a particular social, cultural, or political movement to a wider pluralistic society" (p. 92). For the participants, storytelling was a way of understanding. It helped students to

understand themselves and other students' needs, behaviors, and emotions. It encouraged them to make sense of the world around them, build an awareness of others, establish empathy, and create cross-cultural connections. Using biblical and multicultural stories offer opportunities for students and teachers to reveal their own cultural backgrounds, identities, personal perceptions, and feelings. Storytelling-based language learning activities enhance students' ability to socialize and make and keep friends from different cultural backgrounds. Accepting people from diverse cultural backgrounds is the core of the Bible. For example, God sent the Jewish prophet Jonah to preach to Gentiles who were living in Nineveh, Philip preached to an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:25-40), Peter preached to a Gentile (Acts 10), and Paul preached to Gentiles who lived in Asia Minor (Acts 13:1-28), Macedonia (Acts 16:1-17:15), and Greece (Acts 17:16-22).

Category 3: The Know-How to Integrate Faith and Learning

Research Question 3 asked, "How do Christian teachers integrate faith and learning by using storytelling?" The participants responded in turn and each provided a response to the question. Participant 1 said, "… by using a variety of teaching techniques and strategies that acknowledge and affirm the diversity of intelligences and gifts shared between the learners such as discussions, games, problem solving, attentively, role play, dramatization, multicultural stories and songs, real-life exposure to the target culture and making use of the available cultural community resources." Participant 2 responded, "… engaging and stimulating students via a rich and diverse pedagogy that honor students from diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic background as creatures of God." Participant 3 stated, "… creating shalom learning community through safe environment, positive climate, teacher and peer support, relaxed and friendly atmosphere, encouraging words, patience, respect and acceptance, and authentic materials such as posters, displays." Participant 4 said, "… involving students in collaborative and cooperative language learning activities, small group projects, and peer-sharing settings, in-class and out-of-class peer buddy." Participant 5 added, "… building relationships among the learning that are sensitive, accepting, inclusive, affirming, and supportive of all learners." For Participant 6, "… creating a classroom environment conducive to the restoration of wholeness of the learners and using cultural problem solving activities." Participant 7 stated, "… playing a role model through behaving in an interactive manner with students and functioning as facilitators, managers, and mentors." Participant 8 concluded, "… developing connections between the head and the heart by encouraging students to make choices and appreciate the implications of those choices."

The participants' perceptions and lived experience of the know-how to integrate faith and learning indicated that creating inviting, safe, and supportive environment was essential. The participants reported that they realized that the art of teaching is not a static event. They developed a repertoire of story that seems to work well for their ELLs from diverse cultural backgrounds. Most of them reported that they managed to integrate faith and learning through using storytelling by using a variety of hands-on learning activities that enhance students' ability to accept different cultures, practice tolerance and peacemaking, and act as one inclusive learning community. ESL teachers can integrate faith and learning through contextualizing their teaching. In Revelation 21:24, we are told that people from the various nations will be in heaven. St. Paul says, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, so as to win those under the law" (1 Corinthians 9:19-20). There was a great focus on understanding and including students' cultural background in the learning activities. This is supported by Diaz-Rico and Weed (2006), who stated that teaching methods and procedures should be modified and differentiated based on students' cultural and social contexts to facilitate culturally responsive education. Jesus was a relevant hands-on storyteller. He utilized stories that were full of things that people of his time could relate to. Jesus was thought-provoking and interactive in his teaching skills. Utilizing teaching techniques that are engaging and that offer students an opportunity to make connections to the lesson and to each other through story are successful in enhancing the transformation of the learners. This teaching is the most powerful when done through modeling.

Teachers demonstrate respect and love for others through their visible behavior.

Category 4: Faith Application

Research Question 4 asked, "How does the integration of faith and learning in ESL settings help ESL teachers and ELLs beyond the classroom?" The participants responded in turn and each provided a response to the question. Participant 1 said, "…practice Christ-centered concepts and values in the daily lives of the teachers and students." Participant 2 said, "…weaving God through the fabric of all subjects by applying faith principles, words, and values to other areas and subjects." Participant 3 stated, "…incorporating Christian concepts into everyday life." Participant 4 said, "… using faith as a foundation for life-long learning." Participant 5 added, "…made me think deeper about my personal walks with God and enhanced my spirituality." Participant 6 said, "…developing critical thinking." Participant 7 stated, "… enhances the interpersonal and communication skills." Participant 8 concluded, "…integrating the learned concepts with our personal life and recognizing how Jesus would react in a particular situation."

Integrating faith and learning in ESL settings enhanced the participants and their students' transformations. It increased teachers and students' awareness of the Christ-centered concepts and values in life. Integrating faith and learning through using storytelling helped the participants and their students to think critically in their daily life situations. They developed a sense of other through empathy and established good rapport with their students and their fellow teachers and administrators. They were able to live in a Christian way in their daily interactions and communications. They lived in harmony with God, self, and others. This confirms what Dlnkler (2011) stated about the ability of storytelling to restore tellers and listeners to a sense of shared humanity. We know and discover ourselves and reveal ourselves to others through stories.

Experiencing the benefits of integrating faith and learning in the classroom, we managed to build a community of shalom in our community where we become more responsible in action to God, nature, self, and others.

Category 5: Expectations and Needs

Research Question 5 asked, "How can Christian teacher education institutions better prepare ESL teachers for the integration of faith and learning in their ESL settings?" The participants responded in turn and each provided a response to the question. Participant 1 said, "… we need to learn how we can integrate faith and learning in multicultural settings." Participant 2 said, "… we need to acquire knowledge and skills that can help us create our Christ-centered teaching philosophy." Participant 3 stated, "… we expect professors to teach all classes from a Christian perspective and model how to incorporate Christian worldview into the teaching-learning process." Participant 4 said, "… provide teaching filled with Gospel Spirit and Christian principles and values and use teaching techniques that can make teaching religion more interesting through practicing what is preached." Participant 5 added, "… to create a supportive learning environment where integrating faith and learning is modeled in actions and attitudes through devotional sessions and prayer." Participant 6 responded, "… to use pedagogy that fosters active listening, tolerance and positive attitudes and multicultural thinking through providing training in how to teach multicultural groups in pluralistic communities." Participant 7 stated, "… professors integrate multicultural content in their courses and help students share their thoughts and feelings in a secure, trustworthy environment." Participant 8 concluded, "… we expect professors to provide ample opportunities to reflect thoughts and beliefs about God and the world in a secure and supportive learning community."

To better prepare ESL teachers for the integration of faith and learning in their ESL settings, the participants expected Christian teacher education institutions to model the integration in their courses and utilize pedagogy appropriate for multicultural settings. They reported that teacher educators should provide the leadership and role model, which are crucial to the behavior of their students. Palmer (2000) looked to teachers as "someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there" (p. 78). Teacher educators should train their students how to teach multicultural groups in pluralistic communities by integrating multicultural content in their courses. ESL teacher

educators should build into their methods courses opportunities for students to explore the role of storytelling in integrating faith and learning in multicultural ESL settings.

Conclusion

Although there were significant differences among participants in age, years of ESL teaching experience, qualifications, and teaching context, there were striking similarities in their perceptions of using storytelling to integrate faith and learning in ESL settings. The focus of their perceptions of the integration of faith and learning was making the teaching-learning process Christ-centered. There was a great emphasis on the importance of creating a positive, relaxed, friendly, and pleasant classroom atmosphere where Christian values are modeled in actions and attitudes and where students are free to express a variety of emotions. The participants' perceptions of the integration of faith and learning were based on their Christian faith and their understanding of the importance of living together in harmony. Their perceptions indicated that when students listen to and are engaged in the process of storytelling, they realize the morals and values of living together by God's law. The integration guided the learners to think in a Christian way. Using storytelling in the ESL settings as a spiritual and transformational dimension of teaching developed a strong sense of personal identity and integrity that resulted in integrating faith and learning. When the participants used multicultural stories, including stories from the Bible, their students gained information and acquired skills that helped them understand and give meaning to their lives' experiences. They used storytelling to help students examine relation to each other and to God and develop their God-given potential to the fullest extent. Their students shared stories that helped them understand their world, construct a sense of self, participate in their culture, accept others' cultures, and meet a variety their cognitive, social, and emotional needs.

The analysis of the findings showed that integrating faith and learning in ESL settings incorporates establishing shalom and justice in the diverse classroom and enabling students to reach their full potential and flourish in multicultural settings. It is creating a learning environment conducive to the development of the whole person. Using storytelling to integrate faith and learning enriched the spiritual life of both teachers and students, positively changed their attitudes and behavior outside the classroom, and enabled them to incorporate Christian concepts into everyday life situations. The key to the participants' know-how to integrate faith and learning was using a variety of hands-on learning activities in an inviting and supportive learning environment. Modeling was the core of the participants' expectations from the university professors. Christian educators can demonstrate modeling by creating conditions that can touch students' hearts and minds. "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful" (2 Timothy 2:24). "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ…" (Philippians 1:9-10). Speaking of the importance of being a good steward, Jesus said, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15b) and "Take care of my sheep" (John 21:16b).

The findings of this study showed internal consistency. In their answers to the five questions, the participants placed a greater emphasis on using Christ-centered teaching techniques, strategies, and multicultural content as well as creating shalom learning communities to enhance teachers' ability to integrate faith and learning in their multicultural setting. The participants of the study repeatedly referred to teaching techniques and strategies that require hands-on activities and cooperative learning where students from different cultural backgrounds can work together and learn from one another. The participants' responses also displayed the significance of including diverse cultures in the course content and methodology can enhance students' knowledge, skills, and change their attitude towards inclusive environment. The findings also indicated the need to incorporate the integration of faith and learning in most if not all Christian teacher education institutions' courses. The role model of the university professor, as indicated in the participants' answers to the fifth question, presents a challenge to Christian teacher educators as stated in James 3:1: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."

To conclude, there was a consensus among the participants that storytelling plays a significant role in the integration of faith and learning in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. It is clear from the findings that using storytelling in ESL settings is significant as a tool for transformation. Such findings conform to the findings of many studies that reported the role of storytelling in improving people's social interaction (Xu, Park, & Baek, 2011), making people from different cultures aware of their racism (Bell, 2009), creating a sense of shared humanity (Dlnkler, 2011), and enhancing positive relationships, cohesion, and adaptability (Kellas & Trees, 2009). In fact, ESL teachers can use storytelling to meet ELLs' cognitive, social, and emotional needs.

It is formative because it has the power to shape the learners' moral vision. Christian teachers can use storytelling in ESL settings to lead ELLs to understand themselves and others in their own faith journey.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study should be considered in light of several possible limitations. First, the results of this study were drawn from a comparatively small purposive sample of participants (eight Christian ESL teachers). Second, the sampling procedure led me to recruit only Christian ESL teachers; therefore, the findings should not be generalized to non-Christian settings. Third, the data in this study came from a self-report instrument which might include intentional misreporting of behaviors and a possibility of socially desirable responses by the participants. Fourth, my biases and predispositions as a researcher-observer could have an influence on the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, I recommend the following:

1. The integration of faith and learning should be included in different courses for education students in Christian universities.

2. The curriculum of the Christian teacher education institutions should be student-centered and students' real life-focused.

3. Prospective ESL teachers should be prepared to be faithful and concerned stewards who are always willing to support ELLs and their families.

4. ESL courses should employ materials from the ELLs' culture and history.

5. ESL teachers should be trained in incorporating strategies that utilize storytelling-based hands-on language learning activities and cooperative learning, include self-esteem building, recognize diverse learning styles, and honor and support diversity.

Suggestions for Further Research

In light of the study findings and recommendations, I am interested in pursuing the following extensions of this research:

1. Replicate this study for non-education majors.

2. Replicate this study in college-level classes other than ESL.

3. Replicating this study using quantitative research instruments.

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