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Critique 2

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Article

Azevedo, N. (2012). Writing and reading with art: Adult literacy, transformation, and learning. *Adult Learning*, 23(2), 69-75.

Synopsis

This article is a narrative of an ongoing research project- Writing and Reading with Art (WRAP) that has been implemented within a community of African adults who are immigrants to Lisbon Portugal. The project focuses on teaching reading and writing to immigrants who do not know the language and have never attended school before. This organization teaches them the Portuguese language so they can gain confidence, learn to be independent, and engage in their everyday life. This research is based on Paulo Freire's approach to literacy in which they use artwork to express an aesthetic experience where both learners and educators share and contextualize knowledge. The article argues that the same methodological approach can be used in different contexts with different target groups (Azevedo, 2012). In this article the author is able to demonstrate Paulo Freire's instructional theory and the political process. This project also shows that it is influenced by the constructivism learning theory.

Use of Theory

The purpose of this research is to observe the Writing and Reading with Art Project (WRAP) and analyze Paulo Freire's instructional theory and political process to demonstrate the successful results they have had throughout their four years of operation. This research also reflects the constructivism learning theory; it focuses in the importance of learning to society to relate their prior knowledge with new information.

The majority of the participants in the WRAP project are African women, who are unemployed and have never attended school before. Most of the teachers are volunteers who are constantly learning about the students' life, background and culture to understand and accommodate the lessons accordingly to their social life. This supports Freire's instructional theory "The teacher must learn about (and from) the student so that knowledge can be constructed in ways that are meaningful to the student. The teachers must become learners and the learners must become teachers. Teachers must learn how the students understand the world so that the teacher understands how the student can learn." (Lyons, 2011) Getting to know the students' life and culture is also a constructivism approach. Vygotsky indicated learning about the values, language, and developments of one's cultures will communicate traditions and attitudes to develop language (Gredler, 2009).

WRAP teaches the Portuguese language by using Artwork to be analyzed, make connections, start a dialogue to practice and introduce new word vocabulary. In this project teachers introduce some paintings to the class to start a conversation in which they share individual private feelings and thoughts. In other words, art is used to bridge cultural differences. They present painting reproductions from famous artist and also include African painters' artwork which depicts environments familiar to the learners. The artwork has meanings, feelings and memories because they may recall a specific experience. Once that is identified, they discuss about it, have a dialogue and share vocabulary. For instance, a lady saw a woman in a picture who reminded her of herself, she was picking up flowers in her yard just like she would do it. This theme helped to start a conversation with a meaning (Azevedo, 2012). In the textbook *Learning and instruction: Theory into practice*, Gredler explains that in Constructivism theory, learners construct their own meanings for themselves...Individuals select information, then relate the selected information to their prior knowledge, analyze it, and construct a representation in memory (2009).

The educators of WRAP project use constructivism as a paradigm for teaching and learning. They use analysis, multiple intelligences and collaborative learning. For example, they let the

learners analyze the artwork, allow multiple interpretations and expressions of learning and they encourage group discussion (Werner Liepolt, 2004).

The WRAP pedagogical process involves going from art and pictures to words, and from spoken to written words. First, the group observed the artwork very closely to appreciate and interpret it. Then they were challenged to find words to express their appreciation to the group by sharing personal feelings. Words were found and analyzed in which text is produced by the learners themselves. The words reflect the learners' social and cultural reality. According to Freire, beliefs are shaped in to knowledge by discussion and critical reflection (Lyons, 2011).

Some of the volunteers in this project, are researchers who do research in adult education and for the first time they have seen a great success with non-literate adults. Its success is due to the practice and theory linked in constant dialogue as a result of a reflexive practice. Even though this project was designed for a specific population, the researchers strongly believe this methodological approach used in WRAP can also be used somewhere else, with other population. They strongly believe the Freire's educational intervention used in this project can help adults become literate (Azevedo, 2012).

Evaluation

This article explores a research project's educational approach to teach African illiterate immigrants to write and read Portuguese with Art (WRAP). Even though the project uses Paulo Freire's instructional theory and his political process, it also has a constructivism approach. The author in this article is able to demonstrate an effective educational method where participants were evaluated by using critical reflection. They were able to show a transformation in their self-esteem once they were able to read and write. Thanks to the Freire's instructional theory and constructivism approach, these participants were able to learn the language because of their inner motivation. This was possible since their teachers learned about their life and culture to offer meaningful lessons to help the students learn by using their prior knowledge.

Works Cited

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