Implementing a popular education approach in adult education

Andy Nash and Tim Groves
Let’s start with ourselves

• Take a quiet minute to write the things that make teaching challenging for you (one idea on each post-it note).

• Put everyone’s notes out on the table and sort them into categories. Label these.

• Prioritize the 3 most important categories.

• Share your priority categories with the group.

• What can adult educators do about these?
Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
Popular Education

- The starting point is the concrete experience of the learner.
- We create new knowledge together by analyzing our collective experience.
- We link local, personal experience to a broader social and historical context.
- Skills are taught in service of building people’s agency to take individual and collective action.
- We learn by reflecting on our actions.
Our Adult Education Context

• Diverse students with diverse experiences, contexts, and goals.
• Limited time with students, many requirements.
• Limited opportunities to take action relevant to all.

What does popular education look like in our U.S. adult education context?
## Popular Education in U.S. Adult Ed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular Education</th>
<th>Participatory Education</th>
<th>Student-Centered Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues-driven</td>
<td>Issues-driven</td>
<td>Curriculum-driven (responsive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues are problematized</td>
<td>Problem-posing</td>
<td>Issues are problem-solved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim is skills in service of social change</td>
<td>Aim is skill development for individual advancement and social analysis</td>
<td>Aim is skill development for individual advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on collective action</td>
<td>Focus on understanding options and connecting to others</td>
<td>Focus on individual action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participatory Education

• Start with the experiences of the learners.
• Look for patterns and analyze (problem-posing).
• Learn new things (explore the themes, build skills, do research, learn history of the issue, learn what’s already being done)
• Identify ways to take action and take steps.
• Reflect.
Problem-posing process

1. What do you see here? What’s happening?
2. Why do you think this happens?
3. How has this affected you and your community?
4. What can people do in this situation? How can we change this situation?
Eliciting experiences and identifying issues
My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I coming to Boston in 2001. I have one son. My son has eleven years old. He is Norteamericano. He speak English. He speak Spanish but he doesn’t likes to speak Spanish. He doesn’t read or write Spanish. He doesn’t listen the Spanish music. Sometimes he is impatient because I no speak English. Sometimes I think he is embarrassed because we coming from another country.
Jean-Louis: I’m quitting.
Jose: How come?
Jean-Louis: I don’t want to be stuck washing dishes forever.
Jose: Your English is good. Why don’t you apply for a job at the front desk?
Jean-Louis: Have you ever seen a Haitian in the front of the house?
Study the graph above. Notice the title and what is on the x axis and the y axis. Write several true statements based on the information in this graph. Source: <oneinabillionblog.com>
Expensive Technology
Saying No to My Daughter (and the Phone Companies)!

Leonardo Espinoza

Technology is so expensive. It creates problems for families who don’t have the money to buy all the latest devices. How do other families afford them? In my case, I have a big problem with my 13-year-old daughter. She wants me to buy her an iPhone that costs $400 to $600. I say, “No, it’s too expensive.”

Do you want these types of things for your kids? Don’t spoil them like that; give them love instead. I completely disagree with buying expensive phones for little kids. I understand that you want to check whether your sons or daughters are okay, but why must we use expensive phones for that? Now my feelings are hurt because my little girl is mad at me. I love her a lot, but what can I do? It is what it is.

My question is: why do phone companies introduce new phones so often? They should stop thinking only about their pockets and think more about poor families that don’t have anything to eat. Please have some care for others! When you die, you might wish to take your money with you, but, too bad, you can’t.

Leonardo Espinoza, pictured above with his 13-year-old daughter, is a student at the Elk River Learning Lab in Elk River, MN. He is from Ecuador. He is working on his basic skills so he can get a better job. He has three children.
# How Schools in the US Compare to My Home Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Comparison</th>
<th>In My Home Country</th>
<th>In the U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vacations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Parent Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Clothes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Topics that Emerged

• Homework (both supporting children and asking teachers for more/less)
• How to get academic support for children
• IEPs (Individual Education Plans)
• Raising children when patterns of school clothes, etc. are different
• How to understand different ways teachers teach
Questions about an IEP

1. Special Education:
   Services that help children who have special learning needs.
Questions about an IEP

2. Disability: *Anything which interferes with a child’s ability to learn in a regular classroom.*

**Examples:**

- If a child is in a wheelchair, he can’t be in a classroom on the second floor if the school doesn’t have an elevator.

- If a child *always* has trouble understanding what she reads, she won’t be able to keep up with her class without individual attention.
Questions about an IEP

3. Evaluation:

*If the Special Education context, it is a series of tests given to the child by different school staff to help decide whether the child is eligible for services.*
The Special Education Department ensures that all students who require special education services in order to maximize their learning are identified, and their individualized learning needs are met in the least restrictive environment possible. Special Education Department education staff work with teachers, administrators and families to ensure Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students are implemented with integrity.
Scenario

- **Mr. Garcia**: Hello, I would like to ask that my son, Kevin, be tested for an IEP.
- **Principal**: Hello, why do you think your son needs an IEP?
- **Mr. Garcia**: His doctor says he may have autism.
- **Principal**: Okay, I understand. The school will send you a letter to ask for your permission to get your son tested for an IEP in 5 days. There will also be an IEP meeting.
- **Mr. Garcia**: Do I need to go to the meeting?
- **Principal**: No, parents do not need to go. We will give you the information later in a letter.

**Question**: Principal tells Mr. Garcia that he does not have to come to the IEP meeting. Did the principal give the right answer?
Literacy Activities

Put a green star next to activities you do in English.
Put a blue star next to activities you do in your first language.

I read with my children.
I play games with my child.
I sing songs with my child.
I tell my child stories.
I talk with my child.
I write with my child.
I listen to my child read.
I go to the library with my children.

Parent: How is my son’s reading?
Teacher: He is very good. His reading is a good level for this grade.
Parent: Great!
Teacher: What do you do at home to help your child with reading?
Parent: My sister reads with my child at night. I can’t read a lot in English, but I tell my child stories in Portuguese.
Teacher: Excellent! What kinds of stories does he like?
Lucia’s Story

My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I coming to Boston in 2001. I have one son. My son has eleven years old. He is Norteamericano. He speak English. He speak Spanish but he doesn’t likes to speak Spanish. He doesn’t read or write Spanish. He doesn’t listen the Spanish music. Sometimes he is impatient because I no speak English. Sometimes I think he is embarrassed because we coming from another country.
My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I came to Boston in 2001. I have one son. My son is eleven years old. He is Norteamericano. He _____________ English. He speaks speak/speaks Spanish but he doesn’t ___________ to speak Spanish. like/likes

He doesn’t read or write Spanish. He doesn’t listen to Spanish music. Sometimes he is impatient because I _____________ speak English. Sometimes I think he is doesn’t/don’t embarrassed because we come from another country.
True or false?

1. Lucia is the mother of Mario.  
   T   F
2. Mario speaks English.  
   T   F
3. Lucia speaks English.  
   T   F
4. Mario was born in El Salvador.  
   T   F
5. Lucia feels embarrassed.  
   T   F
6. Mario wants to “fit in.”  
   T   F
7. Mario wants to disrespect his family.  
   T   F
Match the cards to the words in the story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>listen</th>
<th>write</th>
<th>music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>embarrassed</td>
<td>impatient</td>
<td>country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mark the word breaks

My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I came to Boston in 2001. I have one son.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My name</th>
<th>in 1981.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t</td>
<td>speak English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My son is</td>
<td>is Lucia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I came to Boston</td>
<td>eleven years old.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sequence word cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>read</th>
<th>He</th>
<th>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>doesn’t</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helping Lucia and Mario

1. What does Lucia need?

2. What does Mario need?

3. What can they say to each other?

4. How can parents help each other with this problem?
The resources we draw from

Immigration

Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs

http://changeagent.nelrc.org

Go to nelrc.org to access free MA online account.