Analysis of Vignette #1

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Art has many forms, genres, and styles.  It provides the artist a means to express his/her imagination, perspective, ideas and emotions in creative ways.  Art is how an artist can express culture and identity through visible/tangible forms (something that is visible and explored through the senses) of something that is invisible/intangible (such as stories from history and about culture).

Three art educators, Stacy Friedman, Sylvia Kind and Roger Dane, came together in a documentary film entitled, “Art, culture, identity and representation”, to share the ways in which art teaches and brings together ideas around culture, identity and representation.  Stacy Friedman uses puppets to explore identity, race and voice.  She believes that art is used to define what our culture is.  It is the road we take in trying to understand where one stands in relationship to others, and it is a tool to get to know others.  She proposes that the process of creating art and reaching a final product is what represents who we are in some way.  Sylvia Kind, who shares her knitting, sewing and collage work to address identity, suggests that art is an invitation to engage in conversation and how we articulate culture.  It can show the relationship between culture and identity.  Roger Dane addresses the intangible by emphasizing that art needs to be interpreted and the story behind the artwork is often untold.

        Stacy Friedman’s film documented the learning process of pre-service teachers as they explored identity, racism and responsibility through puppets.  Goldfarb’s (2002) chapter on “Students as Producers” highlights the idea that students should be “critical producers rather than passive consumers” (p.68).  Friedman’s students were actively engaged in the creation, design and production of the puppets and scripts, and truly understood the past of their ancestors by representing them through their puppets.  This stimulated meaningful conversations and discussions around identity and racism and allowed for self-reflection.  Through visible/tangible art (puppets), students came to new meaning and realization of ideas and concepts that are invisible/intangible.

        Although all three educators inspired students to think deeply about the ideas around culture, identity and representation, Friedman identified some of the dilemmas encountered.  When viewing and reflecting on the footage of her class conversations, Friedman observed the lack of minority voices.  She questioned whether she gave her students opportunity to share their personal experiences and the multicultural circumstances that may have prevented them from speaking up.  She also thought about how to give all members equal voice and to consider comfort levels of her students (Friedman, 2004).

Technology today offers greater access to many tools that help to personalize learning for students.  With the rapid evolution of educational technologies, educators are challenged to consider many things prior to using new technologies in their practice such as, the diverse learning styles of their students and whether or not the technology used is the best tool to meet specific outcomes.  Bates and Poole (2003) developed the SECTIONS framework that sets criteria that should be considered when selecting educational technologies.  Using this framework allows educators to evaluate technology and effectively implement it in their classrooms.

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