North American adult literacy programs and Latin American immigrants: How critical pedagogy can help nonprofit literacy programming

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Abstract: As nonprofit adult literacy programs are often the only options for low-income Latin American immigrants in North America, problems accompanying these programs affect the ability of immigrants to benefit from them. North American nonprofit adult literacy programs often struggle due to the difficulties inherent in using volunteer instructors (often from different cultural backgrounds than participants) who use curricula that often do not reflect students' communities of origin. Hence, the outcomes of these programs can be problematic. One potential way to ameliorate these difficulties is found in the critical framework of Paulo Freire (1985, 1993), wherein curricula are student-generated. The primary argument in this paper is that trained community instructors (or Freirean-trained outsiders)—using Freire's (1985, 1993) model of instruction and curriculum development, working under a demand for true accountability for results from organizational administrators—could improve existent benign North American adult literacy programs into more empowering social resources for Latin American immigrant communities in the United States. The possibilities for such improvement are explored through analysis of positive and negative case studies within the larger literature on adult literacy.

Keywords: adult literacy, Paulo Freire, curriculum, inequalities in education, critical pedagogy

Introduction

With the growing number of Latin American immigrants in North America, demand is increasing for adult literacy programs. Most of these programs are offered by private or nonprofit service providers, though many are supported by federal funding. As private services are mainly accessed by high socioeconomic status Latin American immigrants with a competent or strong knowledge of their native language, low socioeconomic status immigrants with the highest instructional needs are most often dependent on charity-based or nonprofit literacy programs.

Often the outcome data from these programs are not recorded, as such programs are typically offered as supplemental social services that are largely not accountable for their productivity or efficiency. Among educational institutions, such courses are typically offered as a nominal public service. As these are nonprofit initiatives, there is frequently little to no government oversight of their success (Chung, 2006). Without instructors with connections to the community or some form of oversight, the result of these programs can represent an under-utilization of potentially powerful good intentions.

While far from a panacea, a proposed amelioration for these situations may reside in the critical pedagogy framework of Paulo Freire (1985, 1993). In Freire's model, curricula are student-generated, in that students choose what learning objectives they most desire and instruction is focused around that, making learning much more contextually grounded than that achieved through standard curricular frameworks. Given the challenges to achieving large-scale training, as well as the difficulty in implementing accountability measures, critical pedagogy cannot solve all educational ills. Rather, this paper argues that a critical pedagogy framework may provide improvement (albeit modest) in teaching North American adult educational environments.

It is also important to note that Freirean critical pedagogy is not the only method that emphasizes the need for cultural context. For example, in the 1980s and 1990s many curricular models focused on situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) or experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), both culturally contextual models that are not necessarily Freirean. While in this paper critical pedagogy is put forth as a suggested means to make curricula culturally relevant, the author recognizes that this is not the only means to such an end.

In this paper I argue that trained community instructors, using Freire's (1985, 1993) model of instruction and curriculum development and working under a demand for true accountability for results from organizational administrators, may provide improvement in many existing North American adult literacy programs, turning them into a truly empowering social resource for Latin American immigrant communities. The argument is based on an analysis of the findings of empirical studies within the greater literature. From this analysis, various themes are identified across numerous studies. While case studies throughout the last 40 years are included, their selection is based on their relevance to the theme in question, even if they are not the most recent work on the subject.

Further, while the studies included in this analysis cover a 40 year period up to and including the present day, there is a relative lack of published work in this area in recent years when compared to the 1990s and early 2000s, particularly in the last five years. Given the extraordinary abundance of single case studies of North American adult literacy and ESL programs[1], an analysis of the corroborated findings between them is necessary to provide some concrete, positive steps which can be taken by similar programs in the US to improve the retention of (and success with) Latin American immigrant populations. This paper is directed at that analysis and the insight that comes therefrom.

Prefacing this analysis, this paper begins with a review of the literature on Latin American immigrants in the United States and the many structural inequalities and difficulties they face, which make adult literacy and ESL programming necessary. The

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[1] See the references for a comprehensive list—note that this includes 48 studies over a 42 year period.

paper then analyzes numerous case study examples of well-intentioned yet problematic North American nonprofit adult literacy programs serving Latin American immigrants. A description is then given of Freire's (1985, 1993; Freire and Macedo, 1987) theory of critical pedagogy, which is used as the model for an alternative instructional framework based on contextual, student-generated curricula as taught by community volunteers. Case study examples are presented which involve both Freirean curricula and community volunteer instructors, illustrating the benefits of each. To conclude, there is a discussion of whether a nonprofit setting is the best format in which these principles could be applied, or whether private or government ventures might actually be more successful. Within a nonprofit framework, there is a discussion of how these principles might be more effectively implemented, given the potential lack of rigor in such settings.

Definition of Terms and Identification of Target Population

When dealing with adult literacy classes serving Latin American immigrant populations in the United States, one must clearly define one's terms, as various terms (adult literacy, ESL, functional literacy, etc.) are often used interchangeably in such settings. Literacy, it would seem, is a very fluid term, with multiple meanings. Due to the abundance of its variable meanings – which vary not only by context, but according to the language being used, whether the setting is academic or pedagogical, and so forth – some scholars (New London Group, 1996) have come to believe that literacy as a term may have lost relevance, needing to be replaced by more specific terms.

Recognizing the various meanings outside of the context of the present paper, this work will use the terms adult literacy and ESL to describe the pedagogical activities of case studies that are cited herein. The programs that will be used as examples are ones

with programming aimed at promoting English language acquisition among non-English speaking Latin American immigrants, focusing on oral and written fluency. This is the sole criterion used in identifying case studies for use in this analysis—that is, they describe and evaluate programs that promote written and spoken English language acquisition among Latin American immigrants; although a number of these programs also serve other populations. While the case studies themselves use both adult literacy and ESL as descriptive terms for their programming, they were only included in this analysis to the extent that those terms are used to describe the English language acquisition activities described above. This paper uses these two terms interchangeably to describe the activities of these programs, using in its discussion of each case study the term used by the program itself.

Before moving forward, it is important to note there are numerous North American programs targeting immigrant and other marginalized populations which promote digital literacy, online learning and other virtual and digital-media-related skills that are arguably essential to survival in a 21st century society and economy. Such programs have already provoked a great deal of academic interest[2], and merit continued scrutiny. However, this paper is focused on North American programs which continue to promote face-to-face instruction in oral and written English fluency for Latin American immigrant populations, in part because the large-scale continued funding and support for such programs (even in the face of more virtually-based or digitally-interactive options) demands their continued scrutiny, even within a 21st century context. While the role of digital and e-learning should be a part of any discussion regarding service provision to

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[2] For an introduction to the general literature on digital literacy, see Chase & Laufenberg, 2011; Poore, 2011; Borawski, 2009. For an introduction to specific work on literacy in use of wireless technologies around the globe, see Eshiet, 2010; Sharples, 2002, 2005; Crabtree et al., 2003.

marginalized groups in contemporary North American society, explicit discussion of such programs is not the focus of this paper.

Structural Inequalities for Latin American Immigrants

Adult literacy and ESL classes address an urgent and pressing need in Latin American immigrant communities in the United States. Within the economy of the United States, non-English-speaking Latin American immigrants occupy a very marginalized position in terms of education (Prins, 2009), with low literacy levels in English (Batalova & Fix, 2010). This educational inequality limits Latin American immigrants in their potential participation in social safety net benefits (Chenoweth, 2006), and also limits their understanding of crucial personal and health information (Thomson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2011).

Above and beyond these unequal educational circumstances, Latin American immigrants face myriad forms of discrimination within North American society. Especially in the wake of recent racial profiling legislation in Arizona and other border states, nativist sentiment against immigrants has drastically increased, as perceived by Latin American immigrants and their families (Kong, 2010; Pérez Huber, 2010).

In addition, Latin American immigrants also receive extensive discrimination in the workplace. Adult immigrants that are initial English learners commonly report receiving prejudicial treatment from native English speakers (LaBelle, 2005; Yeh, 2005; Derwing, 2003), especially potential employers (Batalova & Fix, 2010; Mora, 2003). Martinez and Wang (2006) found a 46% wage differential between immigrants who speak English and those who don't, even after adjusting for education and work experience. Candidates with strong foreign accents are commonly screened out of the application process for certain

jobs, being deemed ill-suited for such (Hyman, 2002). Even college-educated immigrants lacking English fluency are twice as likely to work in unskilled jobs as English-proficient contemporaries (Batalova & Fix, 2008). Even among those Latin American immigrants that find adult literacy and ESL services, many programs are attached to community colleges with labyrinthine financial aid and admissions structures that immigrants find very difficult to navigate (Teranishi et al., 2011).

When Latin American immigrants are able to enroll in such programs, long waiting lists, difficulties in transportation to and from classes, and myriad work and family demands on immigrants' time makes participation difficult (Wrigley et al., 2009). For all of these reasons, adult literacy and ESL services are essential, and existent programs are often in need of reform. The purpose of this paper is to detail those reforms that could most effectively reshape immigrant-focused adult literacy and ESL programs for the better.

Volunteer Workforces in Nonprofit Literacy Efforts

One of the primary sources of difficulty in North American nonprofit ESL literacy programs is the relative teaching ability of the heterogeneous volunteer workforce. Most nonprofit programs who offer such courses in the United States have restricted funds, and most of the immigrants in need of such services do not have the financial resources to turn to private for-profit alternatives. As a result, free nonprofit programs have a demand which far exceeds supply, and thus are heavily dependent on volunteer instructors (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

However necessary, though, dependence on a volunteer workforce has often been what prevents otherwise potentially successful ESL literacy programs from growing.

Overall, the studies reviewed in this analysis have found that while volunteer-driven programs have been effective in situations in which those volunteers have flexible schedules and extensive quality supervision (Wu & Carter, 2000), without adequate and appropriate training, volunteers can do more harm than good (Gilbertson, 2000). In the case described by Bradley (1998), a citywide campaign run by the public library system in San Antonio, Texas, offered annual classes in ESL and Adult Basic Literacy. Due to economic constraints in the late 1990s and lessening numbers of instructors, solicitations were made to the public for volunteers—of those who responded, 50 signed up for ESL training, and of those only 22 filled out the paperwork to begin training (Bradley, 1998, p. 69-70). Most of the volunteers were motivated by personal feelings of generosity, civic responsibility and ethical concern for the program's participants (Bradley, 1998, p. 95). However, despite good intentions, a significant number of instructors dropped out of the program, citing time constraints (Bradley, 1998, p. 160).

Use of Contextual Curricula to Enhance Programs

Scholars have suggested that a curriculum that is contextually based in the cultural lives of program participants may strengthen their investment in the material. For example, Schalge and Soga (2008), in their study of ESL classes at the Roosevelt Community Center in southern Minnesota (in the northern part of the United States), saw a great degree of absenteeism and a lack of retention among migrant students (p. 151-152). Other studies (Kerka, 1995; Tracy-Mumford & Baker, 1994) have posited that absenteeism is the biggest difficulty facing contemporary North American adult ESL programs. In the case of Schalge and Soga (2008), ethnographic data suggested that learners' dissatisfaction with the program primarily came from anxiety about the seeming

arbitrariness of the program's learning goals, and a lack of ownership in their learning process. Many of these learners came to the program with a strong sense of self-directedness and strong opinions about what they desired to get out of their courses—when these personal needs were not met, students felt frustrated and bored and eventually stopped coming (Schalge and Soga, 2008, p. 153).

Another case study of Latinas in an adult literacy program (Menard-Warwick, 2005) found that a mismatch between learner goals and program objectives resulted in frustration among participants. While Latina participants in the program had the skills to go on to college after their participation in the program, thus fulfilling the ostensible goal of the literacy program and its staff, many of them chose to drop out and not continue because they did not feel the program was preparing them for their own immediate interests, which in most cases was employment rather than transitioning to college. Menard-Warwick's (2005) study highlights the potential positive effects of pedagogical systems which allow for student participation in the development of learning goals, such as that described below.

Critical Pedagogy Framework as a Tool

Critical pedagogy, a system built and primarily theorized by Paulo Freire (1985, 1993), is an empowerment-based model that pushes both students and teachers to question any and all oppressive or unequal conditions in which they find themselves, whether they are based on race, sex, class, or any other form of discrimination (Chung, 2006, p. 8-9). Critical pedagogy pushes teachers to "strive to develop a pedagogy equipped to provide both intellectual and moral resistance to oppression, one that extends

the concept of pedagogy beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills and the concept of morality beyond interpersonal relations" (McLaren, 1994, p. 30).

With regards to literacy instruction, Freire's experience was in teaching literacy to adult learners in rural, poor peasant communities in Brazil. The Movement for Popular Culture, started in Brazil by Freire, was created to help Brazil's poor "shake free of shackles of the past through transformative educational praxis" (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 21). The model was meant not just to make the poor literate, but to "give them the tools to change their reality" (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 21).

Moreover, literacy instruction in Freire's model was built on a student-generated system, in which students chose what words or groups of words they would learn, giving the written word a stronger sense of relevance and reality in their daily lives (Spener, 1993). Thus, as opposed to a strict curriculum based on a "banking education" system in which students are seen as "empty vessels" to be filled with the literacy content chosen by their instructors or curriculum developers (Freire, 1985, 1993), students were able to direct their own learning so as to gain the literacy skills most applicable to and needed in their own cultural and professional context. Using democracy as not only an ideological framework but as an educational method (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 246), literacy curricula becomes intensely more meaningful in the lives of students.

Indeed, Paulo Freire's explicit purpose in creating this system was to not just make learning meaningful, but to foster pride and self-respect among students, providing them with a means of struggle and power (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 21). Literacy learning can be a powerful force in this sense because, as Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987) point out, "language and reality are dynamically interconnected" (p. 29). When

there is a clear tie between literacy curricula and students' lived realities, such curricula can be a powerful means of enacting social change.

Further studies based in the US make similar statements. Brookfield (1986) notes that ESL students could develop more ownership of their learning process and feel more comfortable communicating in English if their existing abilities were more fully recognized. Knowles (1970) claims that instructors should maintain a respectful learning environment, make learners active participants in curriculum development, and give them the tools to monitor their own progress. As adult learners are self-directed learners capable of guiding their own knowledge acquisition, teachers and students should consider themselves "joint inquirers" (Knowles, 1970, p. 41). Weinstein-Shr (1993) suggests that adult learners have their own purposes for literacy, separate from (and occasionally oppositional to) the goals of teachers and a collaborative process is needed in instruction which builds on family strengths and acknowledges participants' home culture.

Finally, in terms of motivations for Latin American immigrants in North America to participate in adult literacy education, self-improvement is one of the primary factors. Beder & Valentine (1987, 1990) conducted studies of adult ESL programs in Iowa, finding that learners were motivated by self-improvement, a desire to help one's children, to find employment, and to simply be able to read and write. These same motivations are corroborated by Crandall and Peyton's (1993) survey of North American adult ESL literacy participation. In simple terms, Crandall (1993) states that ESL students think learning English will "improve their general situation" and help them "obtain some

control or power over their lives" (p. 3). Immigrant students deserve ESL curricula that help them achieve these specific and clearly documented goals.

Case Studies of Student Responses to Contextual Curricula

Numerous case studies show that when efforts are made to use curricula that are contextually entwined with the realities of participants, students respond positively and finish their programs with positive outcomes (see Carpenter, 2005; Gault, 2003; Menard-Warwick, 2005; McVay, 2004). Pamela Ferguson (1998) provides one example of the power of contextualized curricula, teaching adult ESL at a community college in the state of Washington using a Freirean problem-posing approach. Ferguson built the curricula with student input during the class, using her students' prior knowledge, linguistic and educational background, and personal aspirations as the foundation for her class' curriculum.

For example, Ferguson derived a lesson on the area's growing crime rate from input from her students. To make this lesson more real in her students' lives, the class practiced their literacy skills by writing to the city's police chief. These lessons, based on participants' own worries and experiences, facilitated the students' sense of ownership in their learning. This sense of ownership grew to where, when the ESL program was under threat of closure due to lack of funding, the class lobbied the State government through letters to maintain the program and gained continued funding (Chung, 2006, p. 21-22). This experience truly empowered students through literacy. As one student said upon graduating, "we do not need you [i.e. Ferguson] to speak for us anymore. We have learned to speak for ourselves" (Ferguson, 1998, p. 9). In general, Ferguson (1998) was a strong advocate for using the classroom as a vehicle wherein real issues facing students

could be addressed and solved using literacy skills, making the process of literacy learning much more vital and practical than if it were solely contained within classroom walls (p. 13).

Of course, there may have been other factors behind Ferguson's class feeling this way than solely her use of critical pedagogy (e.g. solidarity among students, the particular context of the school setting, community support, etc.). Yet, if her approach was a main contributor to the outcomes highlighted above, it would be important for state and government agencies to examine why her method was proven so successful in the US in 1998 but has not been adopted in other regions. It is not enough to say that a lack of market competitiveness or volunteers is why Ferguson's approach has not been adopted more generally.

Other examples of positive outcomes arising from contextual curricula abound in the literature. King (2000) found that particular activities (such as Freirean dialogue and writing exercises in which students expound on their personal concerns) pushed students to share their own experiences, leading them to become more invested in their coursework. Lukes (2009) found that when curricula were built upon the foundation of adult learners' existent vocabulary (in this case, particularly their Spanish language skills), outcomes skyrocketed.

This type of empowering Freirean framework is possible even when the instructors involved are relatively untrained community volunteers. In Modiano's study (1968) of Spanish literacy acquisition among Mexican indigenous people, learners taught by indigenous members of their own community with little training learned to read in both their indigenous language and Spanish better than those taught by "outsider"

Spanish-speaking instructors. When ESL or literacy instructors are community members, they share a cultural and linguistic background that allows them to draw on culturally familiar discourse forms. As Bradley (1998) states, "people from learners' communities are in a unique position to elicit and facilitate learning around the learners' life experiences because they have shared experiences and can understand them" (p. 53-54).

Interestingly, even when ESL or literacy volunteer instructors are not community members, a number of studies (Belzer, 2006; Terry, 2006) show there are steps which may be put in place to ensure quality outcomes. Various case studies have shown that when volunteer instructors are placed in a supportive environment (Prins et al., 2009) with an effective support staff (Kristjansson, 2004), volunteer instructors of any background can be successful.

In particular, one of the most proven ways to prepare effective volunteer instructors is to train them to think critically about their own practice. Numerous case studies (Bonissone, 2003; Gunn, 2003; Morgan, 2004) show that when teachers are taught to be critical educators that attempt to address their own biases and critically reflect on their teaching practice (Freire, 1993), they increase in effectiveness and are able to produce powerful outcomes despite differences in background relative to their student populations.

For instance, Hornberger and Hardman (1994) studied the teaching practices in a Puerto Rican GED class in the US. In this class, Puerto Rican cultural elements and institutions were used as the basis for all instruction. This was made possible by the shared cultural background of both students and teachers. This approach not only made the instruction more familiar to the learners, but it legitimized their Puerto Rican identity

in an institutional educational context. As stated by Bradley (1998), this shared cultural background between teachers and students is critical for literacy acquisition, whether in a first or second language context (p. 54).

Additionally, Elsa Auerbach (1996) has extensively studied adult ESL programs in Boston that exemplify the positive characteristics of successful adult ESL programs mentioned up to this point. Auerbach's research produced a guidebook for teaching ESL that served two populations: educated immigrant populations as well as uneducated ones. Firstly, the program included a model of teaching adult ESL that builds on the inherent strengths of well-educated immigrants who cannot speak English. The model involved teaching this population English at the same time as Freirean participatory teaching techniques. These students are then used to teach the second population, that of immigrants with little education.

Moving Forward: How and Where This Model Can Work

The previous sections have clearly identified, through both theoretical works and positive and negative case studies, ways in which community-based instructors and culturally contextual, student-created curricula can vastly improve adult ESL instruction in the United States. The greater difficulty lies in implementation of these principles.

For example, in Bradley's (1998) piece on the San Antonio public library ESL program, it was clear that local volunteers (or volunteers with some familial or cultural connection to the primarily Latin American population being served) stayed within the program much longer. However, as the program was nonprofit and thus had limited resources, there were few means by which the program could recruit such volunteers. Bradley (1998) recommended that the administrators of the program seek funding to train

community residents as volunteers and, depending on the resources available, perhaps even as employees (p. 196). However, such funding is dependent on external actors who may or may not decide to provide it.

On the other hand, in Schalge and Soga's (2008) case study of a Minnesotan literacy program, funding was also problematic, though in a different manner. The attendance requirements accompanying government funding were what lead to the program's "open door" enrollment policy and resultant lack of curricular coherence (Schalge and Soga, 2008, p. 155). Supposedly, one of the benefits of civil society and nonprofit endeavors is that they do not have the same constraints as government programs, giving them greater independence and ability to innovate. However, as many nonprofits are funded with government money, that relative "independence" becomes more often than not purely speculative.

In the positive case studies cited above, it was precisely this independence which facilitated their success. In Ferguson's (1998) ESL class in Washington, she was allowed to implement an innovative Freirean curriculum. Indeed, when her funding was in jeopardy she was able to use that very curriculum to organize her students and petition for continuation of funding (Chung, 2006, p. 21-22). Her case is an example of how Freirean pedagogical techniques can be used as an advocacy and program survival mechanism, as well as for their instructional efficacy. Even when nonprofit programs find themselves in dependent economic relationships with government or private funding sources, Freirean techniques can be used as a means of seeking such money.

One question that may arise here is how the relative independence needed for Freirean programming to be successful can be guaranteed. There have been instances in

which such autonomy can be found even within government programs, such as during Paulo Freire's tenure as the secretary of education for the municipality of São Paulo, Brazil in the early 1990s (O'Cadiz et al., 1998). During his tenure, Freire incorporated his own pedagogical techniques into the formal municipal education system. Under his supervision, schools became focused on local community empowerment.

Additionally, formal schools incorporated Freire's critical pedagogical framework in their teaching of school-age children, and an additional government program was begun to teach adult literacy courses (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 21-22). The purpose of this revised system was to help students (both children and adults) become "protagonists of their own history" (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 22). This system achieved true systemic change, as student retention rates rose throughout the municipality and the best teachers were effectively recruited into the hardest schools (O'Cadiz et al., 1998, p. 234-235). Freire's tenure proved that the innovation typically associated with NGOs and civil society can effectively be incorporated into public policy.

In addition, the independence needed for innovative Freirean policy can be achieved in federally funded nonprofit ESL literacy initiatives, as evidenced by Ferguson's (1998) use of Freirean techniques within a US-government-funded program. However, not all government-run or government-funded programs in the US may be able to maintain such autonomy.

The private sector may provide a third option, but private solutions are hardly a panacea. As noted by Pawan and Thomalia (2005), private sector ESL programs can be met with strong skepticism on the part of the Latin American communities they target, seeming to be more focused on improving human capital and profits for the company

providing them, rather than for the community involved. English-speaking immigrant workers are also subject to exploitation, being used by companies as all-purpose translators without additional benefits.

Despite these necessary points of caution, private-sector initiative would likely meet with strong support from the US Latin American immigrant population. As the participants in several of the studies mentioned, one of the main reasons they enter literacy programs is to gain the functional literacy needed to improve their work performance (Schalge and Soga, 2008, p. 153). The literacy skills taught in such a private setting would be relevant to the immediate occupational needs of Latin American immigrant participants, and they would thus avoid the frustration seen by Schalge and Soga (2008).

As numerous adult literacy programs have shown, such "literacy comes second" approaches in which functional literacy is taught so as to facilitate another skill (rather than literacy programs taught for literacy's sake) are exceptionally successful (Knowles, 1970; Weinstein-Shr, 1993; King, 2000; Rogers, 2000).

As evidenced by Ferguson (1998) and Auerbach (1996), the nonprofit sector can also effectively incorporate the Freirean curricular base and community instructor workforce necessary to effectively facilitate adult ESL instruction. However, as Bradley (1998), Schalge and Soga (2008), Kerka (1995) and Tracy-Mumford & Baker (1994) demonstrate, the North American nonprofit sector can also encounter structural or internal difficulties impeding the incorporation of such principles. Though theorists have attested that civil society organizations are able to provide services in a way that is independent of private market forces and government restrictions (Enjolras, 2009, p.

766), the real ability of nonprofits to be independent and innovative is not so simple. The ability to practice innovative Freirean pedagogy will depend on the willingness of funding resources to support such work.

On the other hand, autonomy in program development does not always lead to implementation of effective teaching methods. When literacy-focused nonprofits are able to exercise relative independence, not all will choose to use those practices that are most effective. In order for all literacy-seeking Latin American immigrants in North America to find programs that effectively can teach them, there are benefits to having governmental encouragement of best practices (as illustrated by Paulo Freire's tenure as secretary of education).

In summary, this paper has identified two main characteristics of effective adult literacy ESL programs: they have a Freirean empowerment-based curricular framework which caters to students' needs and involves students in the curricular development process, and they employ community members (or well-trained outsiders) as instructors. The primary point still in dispute is whether nonprofit programs are the best medium through which these characteristics can be encouraged and effectively "scaled up" so that they can become the norm in North American adult literacy ESL programs.

In terms of government means of "scaling up," the United States and Canadian governments could become more directly involved in the provision of such literacy programs, allowing for compensation of instructors through state funding sources (Bradley, 1998, p. 186). Another possible approach is increasing federal funding for programs oriented around Freirean pedagogy, as illustrated in Souto-Manning's (2010) work with programs that use Freire's culture circles as a means to help educators to

empower marginalized adult education participants to identify the oppressive structures that surround them. Both of these options would allow community member instructors to be more easily retained and help participants to "name their worlds" (Freire, 1993).

In general, this paper has begun the discussion of how Freirean curricula and the use of community volunteer instructors could become more widespread. Specifically, this paper has considered the possibility of promoting more Freirean private workforce and state-sponsored adult literacy ESL programs as well as increasing federal funding for such work. Realistically, it must be noted that applying a Freirean approach will not solve all problems, even if, arguably, doing so might transform them. Further research documenting and evaluating efforts in all of these areas is necessary to advance the discussion of how to best serve the Latin American immigrant population in North America in their quest to become literate.

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