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EDUCOMIX: TOWARDS A CRITICAL, HE-READY COMICS-BASED PEDAGOGY

The following is a comic based upon my research project on educational comics (educomix), the project aims towards creating an HE-ready comics pedagogy as well as arguing that it would be inherently a critical pedagogy. Contact me for more: Kevin.Hoffin@BCU.ac.uk

Accessibility: To listen to an audio description of this comic, please visit www.bcu.ac.uk/inclusive-teaching-comic-audio

How to create an academic comic...

STEP ONE: Design a lovable, relatable character, who just may resemble the creator...

STEP TWO: Literally, everything else.

As an academic with a primary interest in comics, graphic novels and sequential art, I'm always trying to promote their use in the classroom. I use them frequently, and I encourage others to do so too.

My research goal is to synthesise methods of comics pedagogy into a single, HE-ready, interdisciplinary format, while arguing that such a comics-based pedagogy is inherently a critical pedagogy.

In order to do that successfully, I must:
1. A mapping exercise of existing educomix (educational comics)
2. Research into how HE students and learners respond to using comics, in both learning from and making.

BUT First, as they say, "Here's comes the science"...

INTRODUCTION

SO, what ARE comics?

Comic artist Will Eisner used the term 'sequential art', meaning that in themselves, pictures are pictures... but when two or more are put together and meant to be read in sequence- that's comics (Eisner, 1992).

Beyond that, comics can be anything. When comics are dismissed as just for children- that's because they have been defined too narrowly (McCloud, 1993: 3).

From epic sci-fi sagas to simple satirical panels found in newspapers, to this, right here, in this journal, that you're reading, right now.

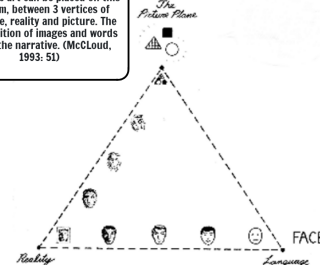
I'll leave it to special guest cameo Scott McCloud himself to give us a definitive definition. Take it away, Scott...

OKAY, HOW DOES THIS SOUND?

JUXTAPOSED PICTORIAL AND OTHER IMAGES IN DELIBERATE SEQUENCE

Perfect! (McCloud, 1993: 8)

This is the abstraction pyramid. ALL comic art can be placed on this diagram, between 3 vertices of language, reality and picture. The juxtaposition of images and words forms the narrative. (McCloud, 1993: 51)



Jimenez and Meyer (2016) found that teachers were in fact willing to teach with comics, but as they were not readers themselves- they felt too distant from the medium.

Vygotsky defined 'mediated action' as an action 'one does with... a cultural tool' (Kelley, 2020). The tool (the comic) is created and sustained by the culture for the purpose of mastery of a skill.

Although Vygotsky believed that once the skill is mastered, the tool becomes less important/interiorised. Wertsch believed that the tool maintains a place in the relationship, although purpose may shift. Thus tool and culture should be analysed as one (Kelley, 2020).

Could someone get him out of my class room, please?

We interrupt this story to bring you an important message from our sponsors. If YOU are reading this and wondering: Just how does he do this? Check out www.storyboardthat.com

OK, now back to the comic. When we last saw Kevin talking about some of the literature that has informed this project. Now when we return, we will see the origin story of Kevin's career pursuit of teaching with comics...

When I first started teaching, I realised that it can be an incredible time constraint on students to read through the amount of module-related text. There are very few students who are only students now. So many have jobs and caring responsibilities and families.

As educators we have to work with this new reality. Chapters of dense reading is not always the best way. A more inclusive method is needed. I propose that comics is that method.

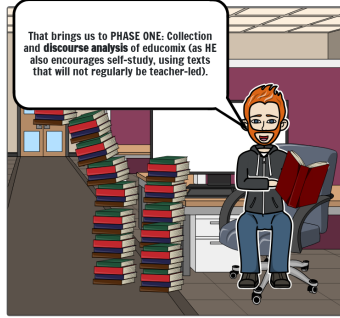
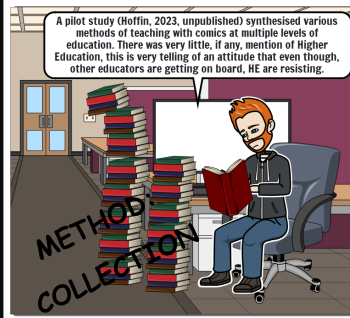
In 2019, I wrote a comic to teach criminology in a visual manner. Freire surmised that in order to be able to take part in society fully, students must be able to name and speak to that society (Freire, 2000: 76). An inclusive pedagogy is vital to achieve that objective. The comic's role was to place theory in an applied setting that students can recognise and follow.

The COVID pandemic slowed down a lot of progress on the comic, as it was originally envisioned that future issues would involve submissions from offenders as part of their therapy. I would like to revisit this element one day.

ORIGIN STORY

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ANALYSIS

Data from the PHASE TWO focus groups will be analysed via discourse analysis. The theoretical freedoms associated with this kind of analysis make it a an efficient data analysis tool for education into research and comics. It allows for flexibility and seamless integration with the findings of PHASE ONE (Burr, 2000)

Due to the social constructivist nature of the research and the theoretical frameworks involved (Vygotsky and Wertsch with 'mediated actions', Rosenblatt's 'transactional theory of reading', Halliday's 'Meaning Habits') Discourse analysis will require a sense of reflexivity, being that 'talk' about comics is as vital to the culture as the 'comics themselves' (Burr, 2000: 161)

To ensure the trustworthiness of data interpretation and adherence to ethical considerations, the analysis model will incorporate elements of the analytical model set out by Nowell et al.. (2017).

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