

Increasing Professional Knowledge with Research

Read the following case study and answer the questions that follow. The paragraphs are numbered for your reference.

1. Tony Horton is beginning a unit on immigration with his American History students. He wants his students to examine some of the factors that influence the rates of assimilation of different immigrant groups. "They need this stuff," he thinks to himself. "We're a nation of immigrants, and they need to think about how this topic relates to their own lives."
2. "They're liable to think this stuff is boring," he muses as he plans his unit over the weekend. "I think I'll try and apply the stuff the people were talking about in the article I read last week, where they found that kids were more interested in classes when they gathered the information themselves, than they were in classes where the information was presented to them. . . . I'll give it a try. If it doesn't work, I'll try something different the next time I teach this topic." He makes a few more planning notes, and then says to himself, "I believe I'm ready."
3. On Monday, he begins by saying, "Immigration in this country has increased dramatically in the last thirty years, and we now have more diversity in this country than we ever had in the past. . . . But, how do you think the immigrant groups are assimilating into American society? . . . What do you think influences how quickly they assimilate?"
4. Tony then discusses what the concept *assimilate* means, and when he is satisfied that the students understand the concept, he asks for some suggestions about the factors that influence how quickly immigrant groups assimilate.
5. "I think it's related to how similar they are," Kathy offers. ". . . Like it would be a lot easier for someone from England to assimilate than someone from like India or some place like that."
6. Other students nod their heads, and the class agrees that they should try to find out about that idea.
7. Since they were studying the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tony then asks the class to consider some groups that immigrated during that time. After some discussion, they decide to gather information about Italian immigration, since they came from Europe; Chinese, because they would represent Asian; and Puerto Ricans, since they were close to our country.
8. Tony then organizes the class into six groups, two of which were assigned to each immigrant group. The groups gather information from books, periodicals, and the Internet for the rest of the day and during class on Tuesday. Tony emphasizes that they need a way to represent the information so they can all analyze it, and with his guidance the students compile the information in the table that appears as shown below:

Italians	Chinese	Puerto Ricans
First generation did not mix Church schools Second generation moved away from home "Little Italy" in New York City Second generation "Americanized" English language learned quickly by second generation Catholic religion	Men as job hunters initially lived together "China Towns" established in major cities Retained many former customs Little social association with others Eager to preserve customs Confucianism Taoism Chinese alphabet	"Spanish Harlem" in New York English language learned quickly by second generation Initially church, then public schools Second generation, "Americanized" Catholic religion

9. On Wednesday, Tony says, "All right everyone, slide your desk next to your partner and we're going to analyze the information that we've put together. . . . Work with your partner for five minutes and see what conclusions you can make." (Tony has members of groups seated close together, so they can move back and forth from small-group to whole-group activities with a minimum of disruption.)

10. The students go to work, and at the end of the five minutes Tony says, "Okay, let's take a look. What do you have there?"
11. After some discussion, the class concludes that the Italian and Puerto Rican cultures are more like the American culture than are the Chinese, and they cite religion and language symbols as evidence.
12. "They assimilated less quickly, too," Aurelia concludes. "It says that the Italians and Puerto Ricans became 'Americanized' by the second generation, but it doesn't say that about the Chinese."
13. "And it says that they were eager to preserve customs," Darrell adds.
14. "So, what does that suggest about our original idea?" Tony asks.
15. "I think it was right," Norma offers. "The Chinese aren't as similar and they didn't assimilate as rapidly."
16. "That's excellent thinking," Tony smiles. "Just a reminder about our conclusions. . . . Technically, we can't really say that they are right or wrong. We can say, however, that we have support for the conclusion. Our data so far support it. . . . So, at least tentatively what can we say about the assimilation of immigrant groups?"
17. "I . . . think," Cara begins hesitantly, "that the more alike the immigrants are to the place they're going, . . . the faster they assimilate."
18. "So, the greater the similarity between two cultures, the more rapid the assimilation," Tony nods, reinforcing Cara's conclusion.
19. They discussed this point for a few more minutes, and Tony then ends the lesson.