Reflection #5

War is a vast topic that is able to describe anything ranging from civilian roles in wars to the politics of it as well. The sheer amount of information that is possible to obtain from talking about the concepts of war can shed light on various parts of our everyday lives such as the current war on Syria occurring now. During my own group’s instructor session on November 11, 2015, on the topic of war, we decided to educate the class on the dynamics and the current news of the Syrian war. I believe the group had a successful presentation overall due to achieving our goal of educating the class throughout the various activities, however, even though many hardships occurred, I still gained a good amount of teaching experience.

The war on Syrian presentation included many activities that increased the knowledge about the conflict throughout the class. The group started of with the conflict spectrum and the question, “Where do you stand on war.” Questions that were meant to trigger response from both sides of the “for war” and “against war” created a discussion that was full of great opinions that drove the conversation. This opener was meant to see where the audience stood on war, and later the group would repeat this process again at the end to see if anyone’s mind had changed. According to Kraybill’s book this process is best used as warm ups to realize where each person stands in certain situations (Kraybill, 2006). After this process we transitioned into the main introduction of war, which gave a brief summary of the events that have since occurred in the conflict. About halfway in the introduction we stopped to give personal stories of encounters of the war and listening to the stories we encouraged people to share their own. I regret not staying silent for long as no one shared any stories, however, if I had been confortable with the silence, then there would have been a possibility of a great discussion from the class. As Chung and Wright have in their book, nonverbal communication plays a huge part in communicating, and if ones communication skills are not correct, then it would throw off the whole conversation (Chung, 2012). However, the opener not only allowed the group to warm up to the future activities that they participated in, but it also gave them knowledge on the Syrian war.

The discussion gave our group a chance at finding new ways to educate the audience and try new activities. The next activity, which I enjoyed greatly and hopefully plan on one day incorporating into my own class, came from Professor Michael’s suggestion on what to try in our discussion. When our group had hit a rough patch and we were not too sure on what we could do next the Professor suggested a new technique that he had not seen yet called the snowball. The snowball technique is a brainstorming and conversation generating activity that has the students write down a question on a piece of paper, throw it like a snowball by crumpling it, then answering the question. As we finished writing down our question we got into a circle and had our “snowball fight.” It was really enjoyable and I believe the students really got into it by being able to ask their own questions then playing around for a bit before getting serious again. This is definitely a technique that I would like to see once more. The snowball technique, however, was not the only new activity presented by our group.

The last of the activities were meant to be not only finishing activities, but also the goal was to leave the students thinking about war. The last of the main activities was the choice scenario activity that put the students into the action, as they had to find the best possible choice to the problem they had faced. I felt that this activity was nice, even though it could have been set up a little better due to the distance between the groups and the set up prior to the activity. At the end, though, I did enjoy the conflict spectrum that rounded up and brought the discussion to a close. I had set this one up to be an opener and finisher combo that would have the students reflect on the activity by explaining what they learned. There was not too much movement in the spectrum, not to my surprise, but a good conversation still held. After this we ended with a video that a group member had found halfway that really surprised me because it added so much more depth to the discussion that without it would have been weakened. With that the discussion ended with reviews from the professors.

The experience gained from presenting with a group to the class was a great way for me to prepare myself as a future teacher. Although there were plenty of hardships throughout the setup of the dialogue, the end result was a great experience for everyone involved. I learned a great amount of new information and tactics from not only setting up various activities in my own group, but also seeing each technique work for each group and the final response from both professors made me reflect at the end of the day and think about how I could apply the techniques for future instructor sessions. The end result of presenting the Syrian war to the class with my group gave me a great opportunity to demo teaching as a career.

Works Cited

Chung, L. C., & Ting-Toomey, S. (2012). Understanding Interpersonal Communication.

Kraybill, R., & Wright, E. (2006). The little book of Cool Tools for Hot Topics.