



**CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM
(ANALYSIS OF A FILM: *FREEDOM WRITER* BY RICHARD
LAGRAVENESE, STARRED BY HILLARY SWANK)**

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Abstract:

The potential value and uses of films in the classroom are undisputable. The practicality of films in classroom teaching character has been demonstrated to be influential to the teaching activities. A movie has a strong effect on students' mind and senses. Videos are instructional tools for students' character. Digital technology based on films in classroom increases the attention of students, creates memorable visual images, and fosters deeper learning. Character education and development is significantly facilitated by the films in the classrooms. Films are educative when carefully and purposively selected for teaching character. Moral, performance, and civic characters like respect, caring, love, and effort, fighting against racism, gender equality, community work involvement, and patriotism are fruitfully learnt through films watching in the classroom. This provides to teachers the opportunity to use films in classrooms for character education and development.

Keywords: character education, digital technology, movie

1. Introduction

Education is significantly changing due to the digital technology. Digital technologies are everywhere, and they are influencing what, where, how, and why students learn and who they learn from (Ministry of Education, 2015). The school life experience demonstrates that digital technology has significantly revolutionized and influenced teaching and learning process. Digital technology in classroom covers the use of electronic media like computers, internet, smart phones, and video clips or films in the classroom during teaching-learning process (Aikat, 2015). Researches indicated that

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digital technology when properly used can greatly improve teaching and learning in educational institutions. There is a positive effect associated with technology-based instructions. (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu, 2005). The use of films in the classrooms has transformed the classroom environment into the vivid reality. In addition to that, Fu (2013) stated the knowledge can effortlessly be acquired through video clips, audio sounds, and visual presentation. This indicates that the influence of digital technology based on the use of films in classrooms can be successfully integrated and adapted in the classrooms for the benefits and the role that is intended to play in the teaching and learning process for better academic success.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Character Education

Character education has been the major focus of schools all over the world. The main identified and focused are the three types of character education in teaching namely moral, performance, and civic character education which are crucial and qualified to be compulsorily part of school curriculum in order to secure the students' academic performance in any school. A study has demonstrated that there is a significant positive relationship between student achievement and character education (Lunenburg & Bulach, 2005). This means that character education programme pointedly promotes academic success. The best character education focuses on academic excellence, personal achievement, and citizenship development (Ryan et al., 1996). This shows how character education programme should emphasize on the three type of character education namely moral, performance, and civic character education.

The concept of character education has the potential to transform the culture of a school in a way that improves both learning and behaviors (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). This indicates that character is a set of human qualities that are needed to help individuals live peacefully with others and achieve successfully in a particular community. The qualities include integrity, honesty, self-discipline, positive attitude, respect, justice, and perseverance. Furthermore, Covey (1990) stated that the purpose of character education is to achieve a better balance between the development of character and intellect. He further stressed the danger of imparting knowledge without character noting that it does not make good instructional sense to focus on purely intellectual development without also focusing on a student's character development.

2.2 Character Education through Digital technology

Digital technology through use of films in the classrooms is a powerful tool for character education and development. Students in schools today have developed the mastery and competence of digital technologies in all what they do (Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010). The school board and administration should now take the lead and seize this opportunity to include digital technology based on films in classrooms in all teaching activities whenever possible. The school administrators are mandated to

avail all resources needed by teachers in the implementation of films in the classroom. Using films in the classroom is regarded as the best approach when teaching today's students who are digitally minded to facilitate the students use multiple intelligences and various learning styles like critical thinking, reflection, visual, audio, kinesthetic, and tactile.

The use of films in the classroom has a significant relationship with the increase of academic success (Berk, 2009). Therefore, school board and administration should bear in mind that the use of movies is directly linked to the academic success when successfully implemented in the classrooms. In addition to that, the school administration needs to sit and establish strategies and techniques for fruitful implementation in order to increase the academic success and achievement.

The use of films in the classroom has brought significant influence on teaching activities and learning environment. Researches have also demonstrated the connection between the media and the intelligence of the students (Gardner, 2000; Veenema & Gardner, 1996). Three reasons supporting the use of films in the classrooms have been identified namely the stimulation of students interests to research and read about subject more, films in classroom trigger the class discussions, and they make abstract concepts more concrete and convincing. They also capture the attention of students (Lavelle, 1992). Thus, the school administration should consider and take care of the benefits and the role played by films in classrooms to continually support teacher in the implementation.

3. Discussion: Character Education through Digital technology

Character education is also learnt through films in the classrooms. Wimmer et al. (2012) found that students are able to learn from characters in media clips, making a connection with real-life events as they think about how they would act in a similar situation. Moral, performance, and civic characters are learnt through films in the classroom.

3.1 Moral Character

Lickona and Davidson (cited in Seider, 2012) stated that moral character is the character consisting of qualities such as integrity, justice, caring, and respect needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior. *Freedom writer* by Richard LaGravenese is one of the films that I have appreciated which emphasizes the moral characters of a teacher like listening to students, and caring students' situations and the classroom environment. Performance characters is also demonstrated in the use of films in the classrooms.

3.2 Performance Character

Lickona and Davidson (cited in Seider, 2012) stated that performance character includes qualities such as effort, diligence, perseverance, a strong ethic, a positive attitude,

ingenuity, and self-discipline which are needed to realize one's potential for excellence in academics, co-curricular activities, and the work place. *Freedom writer* by Richard LaGravenese protagonist demonstrates performance characters like effort, perseverance, and positive attitude when necessary. This shows that the use of films is very important to teach students and remind teachers the role of character education. The school administration has to use the films for training the teachers on how to demonstrate moral and performance character.

3.3 Civic Character

The civic character education can be also taught by using films in the classrooms. Seider (2012) stated that the civic character refers to the knowledge, skills, virtues, and commitments necessary for engaged and responsible citizenship. He further stated that civic character strengths include civic and political knowledge, an ethic of participation and service, and the numerous social skills necessary to work productively with others for the common good. The movie *Freedom writer* by Richard LaGravenese has demonstrated that the teacher focused on civic education through various approaches like taking students to visit museum, inviting guests to talk about the impact of racism. These have considerably influenced the students. They have totally changed their life styles and remarkably improve their academic performance. The school administration should organize and choose the movies purposively because of their influence on students' moral, performance, and civic character.

3.4 School Administration and Support to Teach Character Education in Classrooms

The school administration should continually look for improvement and best strategies to support the use of films in the classrooms due to their benefits. Berk (2009) stated that watching a movie superficial, emotions and deep feelings are elicited like excitement, laughter, relaxation, love, and boredom. These emotions are often triggered and heightened by the mood created by specific visual scenes, and the actors. A movie has a strong effect on your mind and senses. Videos are instructional tools for students' character.

Berk (2009) has also outlined the outcomes of use of films in the classrooms such as grabbing students' attention, generating interest in class, creating a sense of anticipation, drawing students' imagination, improving attitudes toward content and learning, increasing understanding, fostering creativity, fostering deeper learning, providing an opportunity for freedom of expression, decreasing anxiety and tension, inspiring and motivating, and creating memorable visual images. The school administration can evaluate the influence of use of films in the classrooms in order to make a diligent decision in the implementation of films in classrooms.

Despite the benefits and the best outcomes of use of films in the classroom, some movies are not recommended due to the bad moral and social influences they might cause on students' character. To protect students' good character and qualities, the school administration and teacher should avoid and restrict videos and movies

encouraging students towards bad character in the classrooms. Berk (2009) has identified criteria to avoid inappropriate videos. The films identified are offensive videos with irrelevant content like videos putting downs or ridiculing females, encouraging racial and ethnic groups, discriminating videos in terms of professions, political parties, mental and physical abuse of any one, drug abuse, and pornography encouraging sexual relations. Such kinds of videos are discouraged and prohibited to be used in the classrooms. The instructor and school administration should make effort to reject any material that is offensive to students. The school management and teachers should analyze the content and the character education targets of the films before implementing and showing films in the classroom.

The potential value and uses of films in the classroom is indisputable. The usefulness of films in classroom has been demonstrated. Digital technology based on films in classroom grabs the attention of students, creates memorable visual images, and fosters deeper learning. Character education and development is also facilitated by the films in the classrooms. Moral, performance, and civic characters are learnt through films watching like respect, caring, love, and effort, fighting against racism, gender equality, community work involvement, and patriotism.

It is a great time to recommend to school administration and teachers that they should implement the use of films for the character education and development. Films are educative when carefully and purposively selected. The school administration should support financially the use of films in the classrooms. The school administration needs to invest financially in the equipment, teacher education, and support services necessary for effective implementation of films in the classrooms. Character education and development programme is facilitated by the use of films in classrooms. In teaching moral character through films, teachers should emphasize qualities like integrity, justice, caring, and respect needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior (Lickona and Davidson, cited in Seider, 2012). School administration and teachers should select the movies basing on the character that they like to teach and cultivate in their classrooms.

School administration should also recognize that technology development leads to change in work, change in organization of the work, and it requires competences and skills of both teachers and students. Teachers need to be adequately prepared for implementation of films in the classrooms. Introducing digital technology in the classrooms calls for careful preparation, management, resourcing, and continuing support. To cope with changes and to be effective in the use of films in the classrooms, teacher needs an on-going professional development. Teachers should also be well prepared for successful implementations. Teachers' professional development is the key to successful adoption and integration of use of films in the classrooms.

The school administration needs to deal with teachers' attitude towards the use of films in the classrooms. Research has shown that teachers' attitudes towards technology influence their acceptance of the usefulness of technology and its integration into teaching (Huang & Liaw, 2005). Teachers must perceive the use of films as an

added value to the existing teaching strategies and the practice for supporting teaching and learning activities for the greatest achievement. Many teachers resist to changes. The school administration should take the lead for communicating and explaining the usefulness of films in classrooms when teaching moral, performance, and civic character. Teachers' needs to be assured that technology can make teaching ease, interesting, motivating, creative, more learner-centered and more enjoyable. The school management must assist teachers reorganize the task of technology and how new technology tools are significant in student learning (Plair, 2008).

On the other hand, school administration and teachers should be careful in the selection of movies that they intend to use in classrooms. They should restrict offensive videos with irrelevant content like videos putting downs or ridiculing females, encouraging racial and ethnic groups, discriminating videos in terms of professions, political parties, mental and physical abuse of any one, drug abuse, and pornography encouraging sexual relationship. Such kinds of videos are discouraged. The instructor and school administration should make effort to reject any material that is offensive to students by watching the films before using in the classrooms. Additionally, students should be cautioned when the films contain the offensive content.

4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the potential value and uses of films in the classroom is incontestable. The practicality of films in classroom teaching character has been demonstrated to be influential to the teaching activities. Digital technology based on films in classroom increases the attention of students, creates memorable visual images, and fosters deeper learning. Films are educative when carefully and purposively selected. Character education and development is significantly facilitated by the films in the classrooms. Moral, performance, and civic characters like respect, caring, love, and effort, fighting against racism, gender equality, community work involvement, and patriotism are fruitfully learnt through films watching in the classroom. This provides to teachers the opportunity to purpose the use of films in classrooms for character education and development.

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