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# **Audio-Visual Media In Citizenship Education: How Film Can Help To Apply Human Rights Education Curriculum Topics?**

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## **Abstract:**

*The paper is primarily interested in analyzing how film medium can help to apply human rights education curriculum topics. Author's digestedly systemize educational settings of audiovisual messages and describe some aspects that can educators and film festival organizers point out for themselves in the methodology of teaching human rights curriculum topics.*

Audiovisual messages including documentary films and other audiovisual materials, has great potential to encourage pupils and students to reflect on the values of an open, tolerant and democratic society. Cinema in the context of life stories provides a narrative message model that includes both cognitive and emotional components and is usually grounded in the students' familiar, everyday universe. For Amnesty International films can be affectingly informative: "Film – used with integrity – is a very powerful medium. It often expresses complex issues in a more direct way than is sometimes possible with several thousand words. It also potentially provides access to these issues for large audiences, including young people, who would not consider them otherwise." (Tom Hedley, Chair Amnesty International, launch of National Schools Film Week, 2006). There are many aspects as to how to use films in educational settings and the methodology of using film in human rights education curriculum topics is very complex. This paper is focused mainly on educational settings as follows:

- Using film in festival settings closely linked to schools
- Using film in school/classroom settings.

## **Using Film in Festival Settings**

A film festival is in principle an organized presentation of films in one or more cinemas, usually in a single city locality as annual events. The films can be focused on the individual festival topics or can include international releases as well as film messages produced by the organizers' domestic authors and producers. We would like to highlight that these film screenings have great potential for the education of young people, students, teachers and specialists in all contexts of community and social events. The film festival has to serve as a source of inspiration and strength for all educators who believe that film medium is very important aid especially in the context of human rights education with using extraordinary potential of documentary films.

### ***One World Festival***

The mission of One World is to provide complex and balanced information thus enabling deeper understanding of crucial domestic and foreign relations and social topics and their interconnections. *One World* contributes to the public discussion on the role Czech citizens and the Czech Republic should play in today's globally interconnected world. Most importantly, *One World* convincingly shows the public why the Czech Republic should engage in promoting democracy and security in the world. The target audiences of *One World* are young people, university as well as secondary school students. They are presented with a set of values essential for free and democratic societies by means of human rights documentaries. It is a privilege of One World Festival to award the thus far only international human rights award Homo Homini.

The festival programme covers the highest quality documentary films completed in the previous year and gaining award at prestigious international festivals. In addition, it also includes investigative and activist films, which draw attention to the gravest issues and human rights violations. Within a few years, *One World* has managed to expand to a number of smaller human rights oriented festivals in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe.

### ***One World in Schools project***

*One World* is a meaningful discussion forum. Discussions of diverse foreign relations, human rights, civil society and ecological topics take place in Prague every year. Additional discussions will take place in the 28 regional centers. *One World* is an educational platform. About 6000 primary and secondary school students from Prague and around 14000 from the regions will see the screenings of this year's festival. A debate will follow after every screening. Taking part in the festival offers young people a more diverse picture of the world; it helps to understand news in a wider context, to break down prejudices, and to learn to express their opinions in an open discussion. The One World in Schools project uses the outstanding potential of documentary films and other audiovisual resources to educate and train young people and teachers, too. The aim of the project is to foster tolerant, intercultural communication among young people and to educate them on the protection of human rights through screenings of documentary films and other audiovisual resources as well as through subsequent discussions, accompanying publications and interactive methods.

There are many features and possibilities of well structured film festivals for human rights education to initiate personal civic engagement and which can bring positive changes in educational processes. On the basis of purposes and arrangement of "The One Word" festival in the Czech Republic we would like to describe the main features of film festival which are very well linked into real teaching and real schooling at this paper. Useful festival activities are highlighted as follows:

- *Seminars for teachers* have to be an essential part of the festival project's activities.
- *Existence of "expert groups"* as a support for teachers, e.g. the professional educational basis for the project "One world in schools" comprises an expert group of primary and secondary school teachers. These educationalists have long-term experience of using documentary films in lessons and they have made practical contributions to the creation of new materials, which are being continuously prepared within the scope of the project. They work as consultants, whom teachers can ask for advice if required.
- *Production of materials and publications for teaching* within the scope of the festival - using documentary films in lessons and they have made practical contributions. The project offers schools sets of teaching materials, which are intended for lessons on topical themes concerning the contemporary world and for education regarding intercultural tolerance and human rights.
- *Media literacy conferences* focused e.g. on media education, educating through film or on teaching at primary and secondary schools where audiovisual materials have been used in lessons on a long-term basis, e.g. the conference "One World in Schools conference" (March 2009, Goethe-Institut, Prague) includes the thematic sections as follows:
  - development education,
  - media training,
  - personal and social education,
  - history lessons using AV materials,
  - youth work – leisure activities for secondary school students – and implementing projects in cooperation with foreign partners etc.
- *Special school projects* e.g. *One World* project "Who Else" is focused to motivate young people and to increase their capacity for active civic participation by means of using specific audiovisual materials (documentary films, social advertisements).
- *Film clubs for young people* involving film screenings, debates with interesting guests and practical workshops, e.g. there are *One World* film clubs screenings for secondary schools during the One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festivals.

Film festivals linking into the educational process are a very important aspect of all film and video presentations and for example, in the context of thematic collections of documentary films educators may thus incorporate the instruction in human rights and development assistance into their lesson plans. Furthermore it is astonishing that the project One World in Schools helps over 2600 Czech schools regularly use documentary films in their teaching. These screenings are favorably received by the students, educators and specialists and confirm the extraordinary potential documentary films have for the human right education of young people.

### **Using film in school/classroom settings**

Films are an excellent supplement to the classroom, but it is important to remember that many of your students are not prepared to use films as class texts (BFI, 2008). There are many suggestions to get students to think critically about human rights film topics and to engage them in meaningful class

discussions or individual activities in contemporary methodology in film education. Furthermore in the practice is very important to discriminate school activities can lead to

- percipient's "receptive activities" with complex content and form analysis,
- student's own design, re-design or imitation process of audiovisual messages.

We would like to highlight the role of film analysis and suitable methodology aspects of using film in the context of the human rights education. In the film methodology are many suggestions to get students to think critically about film and to engage them in meaningful class activities e.g. as follows:

- critical analysis discussions,
- brainstorming method,
- role playing of film scene in the classroom,
- analyzing the role of audio component of film e.g. protests songs etc.

In the case of the human rights education program of AIUSA (AIUSA, 2009) a companion curriculum to selected films is offered. One of them is for the recent film *Catch a Fire*, directed by Phillip Noyce. Both the film and companion guide are focused on topics of justice and reconciliation, as well as motivators for social change and important concepts of personal and collective responsibility; interesting the role of film music for the social and political change in South Africa is also included. Furthermore, in the context of receptive and media literacy activities, analysis of film form and means of expression is also significant. We can tentatively find out some special possibilities of analysis (BFI, 2008) e.g.:

- *Analyzing of frozen frame* in the context of image analyzing (composition of frame/shot; scene lighting and coloring, distance between camera and subjects, camera angle, movement of the camera during a shot etc.).
- *Analysis of the film sequence* - pick out to analyze sequencing and timing of shots e.g. how the sequence of shots builds up information and impression, how many shots is using to present the ideas etc. Learners can create a scripts or storyboards to support their variations on the sequence etc.
- *Sound and image relation* – to analyze film sound track and its relation to moving image e.g. teacher can play only sound of film sequence and ask students to listen carefully and describe exactly what they hear in this film part.

In the teaching practice we can find out many other tips for using film in educational settings – here some of them:

- Viewing the film by teacher prior to showing it in class
  - to analyze content and suitable sequences or any objectionable material, relations to limitations of class time and to other course materials,
  - to provide a framework for viewing the film and present to students a set of questions to consider when watching the film etc.
- Educator must always watch the film with the class. After viewing the film he has to summarize the main points of the film with the students and help students to make connections between the film and other course material.
- It is not necessary to show the entire film, but teacher have to contextualize the clip and provide the students with vocabulary and names that they are described in the clip etc.

Using film in educational settings without learner's productive activities in a variety of forms is consequently from the didactic point of view impossible – ideally film human right education must consist of both receptive and productive activities. There are different methodology approaches of film message design e.g. as follows:

- complex film/sequence message production,
- re-design of audiovisual message concept,
- imitation of film concept.

Re-design of message can be also very engaging way of film analysis and may also be finished by the recreation of new structure of original audiovisual message with own goals/ideas of the percipient-analyst in the form of storyboard without technical realization. In nowadays there are interesting benefits of using storyboarding software (e.g. FrameForge 3D etc.) for the re-design process of audiovisual message concept.

Media education applying film in human rights education curriculum topics provides a wide variety of methodological possibilities in the educational process and with respect to contemporary society. Understanding how film messages shape our visions of the world and human right questions have to be a central concept in media literacy and in citizenship education, too. The ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce audiovisual messages has a variety of forms (Aufderheide, 1993) with many consequences of using film in school/festival environments as a source of citizenship information. There are many different human rights education practices that can be articulated by using film in educational settings as well as applying audiovisual messages in film festival screenings closely linking to educational process. The power of the film medium in educational settings and specialized film festivals, especially in documentary context, help to strengthen students' awareness of all human life and society aspects by unique form and build a deeper civic appreciation for why monitoring the *human rights is important*.

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