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Teaching cross-cultural management: A flipped classroom approach using films☆

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ABSTRACT

A film, as a tool for classroom learning, can be an effective teaching method to introduce experiential learning in the cross-cultural management classroom. In cases where actual exposure to other cultures is not feasible, films can be a medium of simulation to immerse oneself in a different culture. This paper explores the use of popular feature films for teaching cross-cultural management using the flipped classroom approach. Along with listing the process and structure of the flipped classroom, we provide a list of 101 films that can be used to teach cross-cultural skills. Using content analysis, we provide a short summary and the intercultural themes depicted in each of the films. Additionally, every film is also mapped across one of the GLOBE clusters of cultures. This enables not only teaching of intercultural concepts, but also allows instructors to choose a particular societal culture to explore. Additional recommendations are provided to customize the classroom procedure as per the teaching constraints and the learning objectives.

1. Introduction

Advancements in telecommunication and transport systems have led to a change in the cultural map of the world. Societies, which were traditionally homogenous, have become ethnically diverse due to the movement of people across the globe. Living in a multicultural society, working with culturally diverse people, indulging in food from different cuisines, etc. has become a norm in our lives. Consequently, the emphasis on cross-cultural education continues to rise, as intercultural competence has become an important skill in today's globalized world. Students, who would be the future workforce, need to understand the nuances associated with different cultures, which would enable them to meet the challenges associated with working in multiethnic and multilingual workplaces. To ensure this, business schools need to design a curriculum that would develop these competencies amongst students. This has been reflected in the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business' (AACSB) Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation, which mentions under the 'General Skills' category, that skills need to be developed in students to enable them to work in diverse and multicultural environment (AACSB International, 2013). Courses teaching about cultures and cross-cultural skills are been increasingly adopted in business school curriculums. Such courses are no longer a 'good to have' addition to the core courses, but have become an integral part of curriculums worldwide. Not only do these courses aim to develop

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awareness, skills and knowledge related to different cultures, but also teach how individuals, teams and organizations manage these cultural differences. The forces of globalization have made it mandatory for individuals to possess intercultural competence.

The same forces of globalization have made it essential that educators come up with newer and innovative methods of teaching and learning. Keeping this thought in mind, experts in the field of education continue to come up with newer pedagogical approaches that provide an effective learning environment and maximize the learning outcomes of students. One such non-traditional pedagogical approach is that of a flipped classroom. The traditional classroom is essentially a lecture-based classroom, where the instructor presents information and lectures the students on the subject matter. Various exercises and homework assignments are provided so that students can learn and practice the concepts taught in class. The concept of 'flipped classroom' brought about a pedagogical shift where the entire traditional classroom process is reversed for enhanced student learning and engagement. Instructional materials are provided which students can read or watch outside the classroom, and the learning activities or homework per se, happens in the classroom under the guidance of the instructor. Talking about the increased responsibility that students have towards their learning in a flipped classroom approach, Lopes and Soares (2018) state how "students learn how to manage their time working with the online course, developing self-study and autonomous learning skills, their role in the learning process is changed, making them active participants of the educational process" (p. 112).

Using this flipped classroom approach, we explore how popular feature films can be used to teach cross-cultural management (CCM) concepts. Through the use of audiovisual medium, films expose individuals to real life characters, situations, locations and behaviors which one may not be able to experience personally. As Mallinger and Rossy (2003) state, "films tell stories about people, their hopes, dreams challenges, and fears, how they relate to others, and what behaviors are socially acceptable and unacceptable" (p. 609). Champoux (1999) talks about how films can be an excellent medium to make sense and associate meaning to the various concepts and theories taught in class while leaving a lasting impression on it viewers, which they can easily recall. He explains how films can visually portray abstract ideas, theories or emotions, which may be difficult to explain in text. On similar lines, we make a case for using films as a modality for teaching CCM concepts.

To summarize, the purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, we make a case for the use of films in teaching CCM concepts using the flipped classroom approach and share our experience of the same. We discuss the classroom procedure in detail and the outcomes of the exercise. Secondly, we provide a resource of 101 movies that instructors can use for teaching CCM courses. Each film is mapped across one GLOBE (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) cluster, so that instructors can choose a target culture that they wish to discuss with the students. Major intercultural themes and basic information of each film is provided to enable instructors to choose single or multiple films to discuss the topic in focus. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly talks about the pedagogical approach of using films for teaching management concepts. We then describe the flipped classroom procedure and materials used in the CCM classroom and outcomes of the same. Additional recommendations are provided to customize the procedure as per the teaching constraints and learning objectives. In the final section, we provide Appendix A and B that lists 101 films that can be used to teach CCM concepts along with segments of a few selected movies from each of the GLOBE cluster.

2. Why films?

Burgeoning research lists the various ways in which students can gain cross-cultural competence. Though traditional cognitive methods of understanding culture through books and classroom lectures continue to exist, scholars argue for experiential learning in addition to the cognitive approach, for understanding the nuances, ambiguities and intricacies associated with cultures (MacNab, 2011). Experiential learning activities help students to actually experience and be a part of different cultural scenarios. Brislin and Yoshida (1994) identified five different approaches in intercultural training viz. cognitive, attributional, experiential, self-awareness, and behavioral. Scholars have studied different pedagogical methods under these five categories to develop intercultural competence amongst students viz. short-term trip abroad (Wood & St. Peters, 2014), working in virtual teams consisting of culturally diverse members (Erez et al., 2013), classroom exercise (MacNab, 2011), etc. While these methods have proven excellent as a part of CCM courses, some of them are not always practically possible in an educational setting. For example, activities like trips abroad or working with virtual teams, involve a lot of cost and huge time spent on getting the logistics right. Some educational institutions may not even have the resources for the same. On the contrary, films can be an ideal way to combine both cognitive as well as experiential aspects of learning at minimal costs and resources. Films can provide a powerful medium for depicting the nuances and ambiguities associated with various cultures, and helps student relate the theories and typologies they learn in the classroom with films. Through characters, dialogues and scenes, films can depict multiple cultural variables and elements in a single instance. In a single frame, one can experience the different clothing styles, food habits, languages and dialects, customs, rituals and many such elements associated with a culture. Of the numerous popular films that release every year, a few filmmakers set their films in a particular culture depicting particular issues. Such films become an excellent source to learn and observe the workings of that particular culture.

So what is it that makes films a unique medium for classroom learning? Through the audiovisual channel, films enable learning through different senses at the same time. Not only do films entertain, but they enable one to experience situations, difference personality characters, foreign locations, etc. which one may not be able to do in real life. Ruby (1976) describes films as "a culturally specific symbol system, which can be employed in a variety of ways to make statements about the world" (p. 436). Talking about the attraction of movies in the classroom, Huczynski (1994) states that,

> Films are not specially made for educational purposes (like management training films) and therefore are different and secondly, many of the students will have already seen the movie, but will have never looked at it in the same way the instructor would present it. (p. 273).

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