

CINEMA AT SCHOOL FOR AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a research concerning the introduction of Cinema at High School. This is an experimental work on the use of Cinema as a resource for teachers and students.

The Cinema, at school of different levels, usually is suggested as “cineforum” experience, a use of cinema based on the description of themes and a debate on the analytical interpretation of films. However describing the contents of a medium is not enough to develop a critical approach: today’s the schools of each levels are called to bring a different perspective on cinema and digital media education. Teachers and students, by the digital technologies, can explore the movie experience. Learning Economics-Business and Law understanding the value of historical cinematographic culture is the aim of this research project. The Cinema, through the early films, promotes the interdisciplinary teaching and the introduction of visual language. This project promotes and enhances the cinematographic heritage of the world by encouraging the teachers to introduce the Cinema at school.

Key words: high school, cinema and digital media education, economics-business studies and law, social science curriculum, interdisciplinary approach, collaborative learning, active learning.

INTRODUCTION

The Italian school contexts have not even well appreciated the use of cinema for teaching and learning experiences as a multimedia educational resource such as in the school contexts of other countries. Although in Italy, we have the attention of the Government, thanks to the new national indications on teacher’s curricula (Trincherio et al., 2013) and the national law in force “Buona Scuola”. In relation to teacher’s curricula of high school, the Italian Government published a Ministerial Order, n. 211 on 7 October 2010, called «Indicazioni nazionali riguardanti gli obiettivi specifici di apprendimento concernenti le attività e gli insegnamenti compresi nei piani degli studi previsti per i percorsi liceali». The law in force on the Italian School Reform called «Buona Scuola», law n. 107 of 13 July 2015 the Art. 1 is specific on the invitation from the Government to introduce, at school of each levels, the media education with a critical approach together the study of film and picture language. Moreover, the European Parliament underlined the importance of safeguarding the cinematographic heritage with the European Parliament Report on the Commission Communication on cinema on 7 June 2002.

The Department of Human Sciences “Riccardo Massa” at the University Milano-Bicocca Italy and the High School *Liceo Statale Carlo Tenca* in Milano, Italy has carried out in 2015 this pilot project on the pedagogical value of Cinema at School promoting the interdisciplinary approach and developing, refining active and significant experiences of Learning. Specifically, we proposed the use of cinema as a resource for the subjects of Economics-Business Law Studies integrated with the history of Cinema, its origin, given the expressivity of its symbolic language and the importance of the International Cinematographic Cultural Heritage. Several teachers of High School in Lombardy, with their students, explored and encouraged the cinema experience thanks to the use conscious of digital technologies.

THE STUDY

In contrast with cineforum method, the current research project on cinema and digital media education aims to understand how to design a course on Economics-Business and Law using an interdisciplinary approach.

The project founded on the idea to offer activities on analysis of film language, movie making and editing to the students of high schools — and later a stage to trainee teachers — on how to make innovative use of Cinema to overcome the rigid disciplinary boundaries’ forms of teaching.

The research project followed the methods of the interdisciplinary approach by Repko (2008) and the theory of Bergala (2008) relating film fragments to one another by organizing them around a theme (F.M.R.). Teaching and learning Economics-Business and Law starting from selected movies, especially the early silent movies, from the origin of Cinema history.

Other aim of this research is to exploit digital technologies in schools as a resource for boosting cooperative and collaborative learning, mainly in relation to “knowledge society” and the use of ICT (Calvani 2007, 2009; Yildiz and Keengwe 2016).

The research project began in 2015. The first year was been a pilot phase dedicated to monitoring the experimental activities. At the beginning, we proposed this experimental work to one class, now the participants are 60 students with age from 14 to 16 years, the total is four classes.

FINDINGS

The theory of Alain Bergala (2008) founded on a pedagogic approach to cinema organizing, among other suggestions, a movie library at school, the use of movie fragments and clips strategic selected for the lessons and for elementary film editing exercises.

The recent literature on the interdisciplinary teaching has shown that students attracted by and engage more readily with interdisciplinary approaches, which help them to acquire new knowledge and reinforce existing knowledge. (Repko 2008).

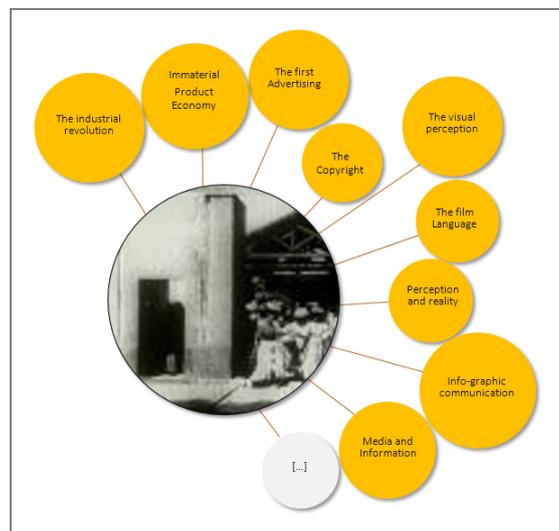


Figure 1: Expanding the borders of Cinema and Visual Arts, the students explored other frontiers of knowledge among Human culture, Arts, Science, Economics-Business and Law.

We are interested on the “reactivation” and consolidation within the cognitive development processes of individual students.

Once we have identified the connections and affinities among the various disciplines, our creative energy was in one direction to answer the follow question: how can we relate them to one another in such a way as to enhance students’ comprehension? (Poli and Benussi 2016). Moreover, other question: how can we foster creative connections allowing students to acquire novel perspectives and new cognitive strategies as they integrate new knowledge and acquire new abilities? (Bolter and Grusin, 2002; Calvani 2007, 2009; Dee Fink 2013; Gordon 2000; Maldonado 1997, 2005)

The proposed methodology helped students to become familiar on problem solving, thinking and decision-making, critical analysis, reflecting on information exchanged, etc. We tried to describe, with a quantitative graphic representation (see Figure 2) the student’s perception regard the efficacy for each different model of lesson proposed (Benussi 2016).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Classical teaching	1	7	8	2	5	4	
Teaching projecting the textbook onto the interactive white board (IWB)	3	6	5	7	2	4	
Multimedia teaching (*)	3	3	5	7	7	2	
Flipped classroom teaching (*)	5	3	8	3	6	1	
Exercises in labs (*)		2	6	6	8	5	
Active teaching style: debates in class inspired by the British parliamentary style debating		4	2	4	10	7	
Activities in collaboration with universities	3	2	6	4	4	8	
Law practical exercises in labs (*)		4	3	5	13	2	
Economics practical exercises in labs (*)		3	2	6	14	2	
Classes held in labs based on interaction with multimedia (*)	2	2	7	2	7	6	

Figure 2: The student’s perception of efficacy for each different models of lesson. (*) Interdisciplinary Approach Cinema – Law – Economics Business.

The interdisciplinary approach became even more fruitful, thanks to our proposal to teach the language of film and watching earliest films from the origin of Cinema, film realized by the pioneers of cinematographic international heritage.

The lessons explored themes on Economics Business and Law by the classical teaching mode and other lessons introduced film literacy, increasing the audiences, knowledge and interest in film language, in particular among the audiences of new generation.

The students threw up surprising connections with other disciplines. The intersecting of different disciplines helped students to attain a deeper understanding of certain concepts and in particular, the root causes and complexity of themes that featured strongly in the early history of film (e.g. the first examples of Cinema advertising Europe to USA and the first USA movie copyrighted).

We introduced also other teaching modalities as the flipped classroom (classrooms in labs watching/listening to multimedia debates), the lean back (characterized by unidirectional reading or watching certain content prevails), and the lean forward (characterized by active and cooperative Learning). In addition, we proposed practical exercises in computer laboratory based on the analysis of multimedia contents in Economics Business, Law, watched early silent movies, significant film sequences and exercises on film language analysis and movie editing (see Figure 3 e 4).



Figure 3: Students working at school in the computer laboratory



Figure 4: *The Freedom of Worship*, frames from one example of short film made by a student (2016-2017)

CONCLUSIONS

The students’ evaluation on the results of these teaching/learning experiences was been positive.

The majority of students recognizes the efficacy of the interdisciplinary approach and the incisiveness of different teaching models of lessons in perspective of their future personal professional experiences.

The students appreciated the innovative teaching methodology based on interdisciplinary approach. However, they also valued positive the traditional teaching methodology.

They developed, among other skills, some fundamental economic principles, they are more conscious on the

complexity of contemporary human society, about how to live in this world, and ask oneself if proper values coincide with the rules of law.

Moreover, from the positive results emerged the need to foster well-established cultural connections and relationships in different fields recognizing the challenges of the contemporary knowledge society, in order to prepare students to become Global Citizens and aligned with the actual Educational and Social Studies.

Our research project continues the promotion of the significant role of Cinema and the film language for an interdisciplinary approach on teaching and learning at different school levels and several other disciplines.

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