



**Understanding film as pedagogical tool for social justice learning
June 5th, Curriculum Development Unit**

Attendees

Mella Cusack from Trócaire/CDU; Matthias Fielder IDEA; Gerry Jeffers NUI Maynooth; Peadar King kmf productions/What in the world series; Alicia McGivern IFI Head of Education, Baz Al-Rawi IFI Education Officer, Deirdre Quinlan, IFI Education ; Mags Liddy, Ubuntu Network

Apologies

Audrey Bryan, UCD; Paul Conway, UCC; Anne Rath, UCC; Kieran Meagher, LIT; Maria Finucane, LIT; Ruth Gallagher, Amnesty Ireland; Carmel Hinchion, UL; Conor Harrison, CSPE/SLSS; Eileen Grey, SLSS; Hilary McLoughlan, CRITE, TCD; ; Joanne O Flaherty, Ubuntu Network

Agenda

11-11.10am **Introductions** - who we are

11.10-12.00 Setting the context - exploring our expectations and what do we want from this group. **Brief presentations** by participants on their work with film: 10 mins max per person

12.00-12.30 **Developing commonalities** from our work - Highlighting potential areas for collaboration, exchanging ideas and resources, and underpinning approaches to using film for social justice

12.30-1.30 **Planning for future - what can we do?**

Suggestions include:

- Future seminars, reading group, providing the opportunities to learn from each other
- A large-scale event on understanding film as pedagogical tool for social justice learning: jointly funded by Ubuntu and IDEA
- Other suggestions include: Problematicising 'Hollywood blockbusters': exploration of development issues (e.g. Slumdog Millionaire; Blood Diamond; Blackhalk Down); 'Edutainment' ; The post film Critical Reflection exercise; Marginalisation, Othering and the 'White Man's Burden' in Film. (Possible themes submitted by Audrey Bryan via email).

1.30 Lunch

Resources:

Alicia McGivern, IFI Head of Education

- IFI produce a bi-annual bulletin which outlines films/activities and workshops. Lot of the information produced is aimed at the post-primary sector- related to Media Studies and English in TY and the Leaving Certificate Syllabus.
- Module in teacher training with the aid of study guides and screenings includes 3 different types of film. Examples of films used include 'Mean Creek' (high school); 'Garage' (Irish Film); 'Maria Full of Grace' (, Columbia, drugs and decision making - subtitles); 'Touching the Void' (documentary, decision making).
- In the future IFI plan to hold workshops on: Film as a Teaching Tool and Making Film
- Film guides, details of courses etc are all available from http://www.irishfilm.ie/educ/index3_07.asp

What in the world series, kmf productions Peadar King,

- 24 programmes, 9 are available to be circulated to schools
- The new series will be shown on RTE beginning June 11th. Also available for view on www.rte.ie/player
- Film can be very powerful and subversive method of engaging young people

Mella Cusack from Trócaire/CDU

- Display of readings, books, film guides and DVDs
- Film guide and listing according to the CSPE 7 concepts
- Current action research project on film production in school, using Clip technology as it is cheap and easy to use (approx €180)

Ubuntu Network- downloadable from website

- Negative as Source of Positive- Using film in Development Education
- List of films related to CSPE 7 concepts
- In process of developing a book list, of fiction and non-fiction
- First screening in the UL film club- *Freedom Writers*

Other-

Critical Media Literacy In Ireland, Radharc Research Report - Nov 2007. The research was conducted collaboratively by DCU School of Communications (Prof. Farrel Corcoran and Brian Flanagan) and DIT School of Media (Dr. Brian O'Neill and Cliona Barnes).available from <http://mediaconference.ie/files/Radharc.Report.pdf>

British Film Council- Film Education Working Group (FEWG), 1999 *Making Movies Matter*, Downloadable from <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/research/advocacy/pdf/making-movies-matter.pdf>

Common themes emerging from discussion

Visual Literacy

Reading film needs to be acknowledged as a skill and can be developed as such. Visual literacy is the ability to theorise film, an approach to analyse and reading film, and create the necessary language. Additionally film can be seen as 'art work' and generate more respect for the medium, and to promote cinema as a social experience.

Film can push boundaries and move viewers from familiarity, through use of subtitles, unfamiliar genres, movies from other places than Hollywood and presenting alternate points of view. Young people have a lot of latent skill in reading film, but this needs structure and development. Technical knowledge of movie-making can be help too.

However film also needs to be viewed with a critical eye, as there are difficulties with issues of representation of countries or of groups of people. In recent years, Hollywood has produced many development issue films, but the storylines need to be viewed critically and the propagandist nature of movies highlighted. Also linked to this is film as 'Edutainment' where the film as is seen by learners and sometimes teachers as entertainment not curriculum.

Critical media literacy

Film is the most popular resource in development education. Media literacy has been defined by the EU Expert Group on Media Literacy as

"Media literacy has been defined as the ability to access, analyse and evaluate the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted with on a daily basis and are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as to communicate competently in media available on a personal basis." (EU Expert Group on Media Literacy)

Using a critical media literacy approach to film and development education needs to examine film as a form of media and issues of power such as representation and stereotyping, storylines of global events, as media consumers.

Developing the capacity and skills of development educators could be the focus of joint event

Teaching as politics

When we speak of social justice, we need to be clear what we are speaking of.

Development issues involve political knowledge and understanding, leading to political engagement and participation. Yet awareness can lead to cynicism, and action for social justice is mere fundraising. By beginning with social justice, we can move beyond subject boundaries and make more cross-curricular connections.

As educators we need to be aware of whether we are challenging views and creating more awareness, or whether we are maintaining stereotypes. We need to begin from where the students are and their understating os of the world. For example recent research showed that the film that most PDGE students indicated having seen was 'The Lion King' (n=70). Also students struggle with Fair Trade or the Buy Nothing concept as they cannot visualise a different political and economic system.

School/ curriculum issues

Some practical issues on the use of film in secondary classrooms were discussed- for example: copyright; censorship (Over 15); and the issue of time. Also some research has shown that whole class showing of a film and the over-reliance on worksheets as support is problematic as film becomes just a passive methodology. On the other hand using film in small segments dissects the storyline and prevents real engagement with the film.

Film as a teaching methodology is only cited in the CSPE. The new Leaving Cert subject Politics and Society is open for submission at present and so there is an opportunity for greater emphasis on use of film in this syllabus.

Possible Outcomes and Future Actions:

- What in the World documentary of the developing world in need of review/evaluation of their impact to date
- Highlight the need for film to be integrated as a methodology into the new Leaving Cert subject Politics and Society, which is open for submissions till Nov 2009
- IFI / Film Board are currently undertaking research on use of film in schools to get a clearer picture and understanding on use of film in schools at present. The Ubuntu Network could do similar for use of film in initial teacher education
- Develop a post film Critical Reflection exercise/ reflection sheet
- Make contact with Kieran at FÍS- from www.fis.ie

FÍS (literally translated as 'vision') is an initiative from the Department of Education and Science. It began as a pilot project and was designed to introduce the medium of film as a support to the Revised Primary School Curriculum.

Events:

- Organise a Media Literacy Event in conjunction with Ubuntu and IDEA. Theme of capacity building of development educators/teacher educators on critical media literacy
- Workshops on Production of film- developing skills and capacities in technology and film software etc
- Make links with Global Awareness Week to include Film Event; academic discussions and seminars. Possibly to include a regional balance by having screenings in other places. For example: Monday-Limerick; Wednesday-Galway & Friday-Dublin with national conference at end

Next meeting:

- Suggestion was to meet in September, and go see a relevant film. As IFI will be closed for refurbishment during the day, we could go to the Lighthouse.
- Planning meeting for joint Ubuntu and IDEA event- Sept 9th.
- Further events will be circulated to all.