

Using Documentaries in Social Science Instruction in Schools as an Effective Source of Value Development for High School Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to assess how audiovisual aids, specifically, documentaries affect the formation of adolescents' values, attitudes and standpoints in the process of teaching/learning social sciences (Civic Education, History, and Geography) at high school level (grades 9-12). In this day and age, students have become accustomed to acquiring knowledge through media such as television and movies. Although books and text are essential in learning, teachers should take notice of the new visual stimuli, too. Therefore, it is very important to find new approaches and methods in teaching/learning process to support young people's personal development through their value formation, ethical and moral development. It is a quantitative research paper. In total, 204 students took part in the survey. The collected data can be interesting for school teachers, who try to apply new methodologies in social studies. The results reveal interesting facts related to the efficiency of teaching through documentary films, as the subsidiary and supplementary method in the process of teaching/learning social sciences (Civic Education, History, and Geography) at high school level (grades 9-12).

Key words: values, moral and personal development, audiovisual aids, documentary film

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to introduce teachers to the methodology which may be easily implemented in secondary social studies instruction. Although this research focuses on grades 9-12, the researcher believes that films can be infused into all subject areas, including language arts, math, and foreign languages to science, the arts, physical education, and more. Although some teachers frown upon movies and television, sometimes films open a student's eyes to new ideas. The process will be more effective and tangible when young people will be taught knowledge not only theoretically from students' handbooks, but also through audiovisual aids that provide the

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learners with realistic experience, which capture their attention and help in the deeper understanding of different social issues. Films will never replace the textbook, but the use of films can enhance the learning environment by placing the student in a familiar arena, the movie theater.

One World in schools

The idea of the research topic came from the well-known educational program "One World in Schools". One World in Schools is an educational programme run by the People in Need foundation. The programme focuses on promoting education through documentary films and other audiovisual materials in primary and secondary schools. The experience of running the programme for more than 13 years has confirmed that documentary films are a great way of initiating debates and promoting interest among students in human rights, global development education, the environment, racism, and other issues, whilst also enabling them to form their own opinions, attitudes and values.

Currently, the programme's materials are used by teachers in over 3,000 primary and secondary schools throughout the Czech Republic. In the recent years, the educational programme has been spreading beyond this country's borders and focusing on cooperation with organizations from other countries, which are interested in introducing the One World in Schools (OWIS) model in their national educational system. Since 2008, OWIS has functioned as a leader in the international Watch and Change project, focusing on development education through audiovisual methods together with partner organizations from Estonia, Poland and Slovakia. It has also collaborated on educational projects in Lebanon, Romania, Great Britain and Sweden. From 2010, the programme works in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Georgia, Armenia and Mongolia.

The goals of the educational programme are to raise young people's awareness about the challenges of today's world and current social issues as well as to initiate a debate, think critically and formulate questions and educated opinions about human rights and relevant issues. It also aims to promote an understanding of the global processes that influence the lives of people in the world and to cultivate a sense of responsibility that will actively encourage them to contribute to addressing current social problems.

The programme offers schools documentary films and teaching methods handbooks for teaching about topical subjects concerning today's world and modern history. The selected films help increase awareness among young people by raising questions and pushing students to search for answers, drawing parallels to the students' own lives and encouraging them to form independent opinions. One World in Schools utilizes films that reflect today's world without lecturing the audience. By using the medium of film, the program gives the students the chance to experience emotional conflict and interact with others as opinions and values form and understanding grows.

Characteristics of the documentaries used for school screenings

The One World in Schools programme uses documentary films that are mostly chosen from the selection presented at the annual One World human rights festival, which has been organized by People in Need since 1999. In general, OWIS program selects films according to the topic which the specific educational material is focused on. The films should be interesting and have the ability to capture the students' attention. Films are selected because they are thought-provoking and pose basic questions that the students can relate to.

One World in schools in Georgia

In Georgia, the educational program "One World in schools" firstly started in 2010. The education materials developed by People in Need were included into the official guidelines for Civic Education teachers that were published by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Georgian secondary schools are provided with toolkits containing a methodological guide for teachers, 16 documentary films chosen specifically for young people and tools for interactive activities (role games and quizzes, sample work sheets etc.). At present, more than 1000 Georgian teachers in about 400 schools use the OWIS methodology.

This learning material consists of documentaries and social spots on DVD and a methodological handbook for teachers. Methodological handbook containing each documentary has these didactic materials: synopses to films, informational sections, which are in Q+A (questions and answers) form and should help to get basic information about the film topic, descriptions of specific activities and worksheets for activities which can be used for teaching. The material is designed to guide teachers in facilitating the necessary learning activities for each film. Each film and didactic materials (especially the activities) were tested in pilot schools in Georgia to find out whether the selected activities are appropriate and helpful for teachers in social studies instruction. The pilot part of the program took place at 10 schools and after its completion the materials were reproduced in the desired amount and distributed to schools that are interested in using them. This methodological handbook has been developed as a structured guide for teachers to assist them with preparing their lesson plan. The handbook includes sections which are divided according to films. It is important to note that each activity has been selected specifically for use with a certain topic/film or sub-topic and these are noted at the beginning of the description of the activity. Furthermore, at the beginning of each activity, details are provided on how long it takes to complete, along with recommendations regarding which subjects it is suitable for, information on the goal or aim of the activity, an in-depth description and a work sheet (if applicable). It is essential that the screening of each documentary is then followed by an activity or one of the general teaching and learning activities, because students may have a difficulty dealing with the topics of the films. Finding an appropriate way to reflect on the thoughts and feelings of the students is very important in order to help them gain new knowledge and form their opinions.

Overview of the concept of values

The concept of values has been the subject of discussion by social scientists, including philosophers, anthropologists, and psychologists for many years (Aristotle, Plato, Epicurus, Stoics, Confucius, Kant, Cumberland, Dewey, Faubion, Erikson, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Allport). But what does 'value' mean? Values are difficult to study and constant questions arise as to whether they are 'real,' whether they actually can be shown to have an underlying influence on human behavior.

The attention paid to the concept across many disciplines attests to the fact that in the normal course of their lives people are constantly involved in the process of evaluation, judging which actions or outcomes are good or bad, or what is desirable or undesirable in relations to more general beliefs and standards. When we think of values, we think of what is important to us in our lives (e.g., safety, freedom, wisdom, achievement, kindness, pleasure, etc.). Implicitly or explicitly we evaluate or assign value to everything - regarding things as good or bad, a truth or falsity, a virtue or a vice. Each of us holds numerous values with varying degrees of importance. A particular value may be very important to one person, but unimportant to another. Thus valuing is a part of the human condition.

Our values influence many aspects of our lives, affecting both the way we construe and evaluate situations and the actions that we take in pursuit of important goals. Values can be thought of as priorities, internal compasses or springboards for action - moral imperatives.

In this way, values are implicit or explicit guides for action, general scripts framing what are sought after and what is to be avoided. Values provide standards or criteria that can be used to evaluate actions and outcomes, to justify opinions, conduct, plan, and guide behavior, to decide between alternatives, to compare self with others, to engage in social influence, and to present self to others (Rokeach, 1973). Thus, values are important elements that motivate and guide human behavior.

Definitions of value

The root of the word 'value' is tracked in the classical Latin '*Valere*' meaning strength, worth and valor. Initially, the word was widely used in the sphere of philosophy (for example, ancient Greek Ethics). During the late 1700's, there began to emerge various branches of philosophy which we now call the "social sciences" and the concept of value became applicable in various disciplines (economics, politics, education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.).

Human values have been a central concept in the social sciences since their inception.

Researchers have different ways to conceptualize values. Table 1 presents seven widely-used definitions of values.

Source	Definition
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Rokeach (1973)	"A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5).
Schwartz (1994)	A value is "a belief pertaining to desirable end states or modes of conduct that transcends specific situations; guides selection or evaluation of behavior, people, and events; and is ordered by the importance relative to other values to form a system of value priorities" (p. 20).
Kluckhohn (1951)	A value is "a belief pertaining to desirable end states or modes of conduct that transcends specific situations; guides selection or evaluation of behavior, people, and events; and is ordered by the importance relative to other values to form a system of value priorities" (p. 20).
Guth & Tagiuri (1965)	A value can be viewed as a conception, explicit or implicit, of what an individual or a group regards as desirable, and in terms of which he or they select, from among alternative available modes, the means and ends of action" (pp. 124-125).
Hutcheon (1972)	"...values are not the same as ideals, norms, desired objects, or espoused beliefs about the 'good', but are, instead, operating criteria for action..." (p. 184).
Braithwaite (1998)	"Values...are principles for action encompassing abstract goals in life and modes of conduct that an individual or a collective considers preferable across contexts and situations" (p. 364).
Friedman et al. (2006)	"A value refers to what a person or group of people consider important in life" (p. 349).

Table 1. The Selection of Definitions for "Values" (according to Cheng & Fleischmann, 2010, p. 2).

The summary of these definitions is that values serve as guiding principles of what people consider important in life. Although the notion of values as guiding principles is literally taken from Braithwaite (1998) and the notion that values are what people consider important in life is taken from Friedman et al. (2006), the given definition is also influenced by Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1994), Kluckhohn (1951), Guth and Tagiuri (1965), and Hutcheon (1972), as they imply that values are what people regard as desirable and guide selections or evaluation of action.

Values can be conceptualized on the individual and group level. At the individual level, values are internalized social representations or moral beliefs that people appeal to as the vital basis for their actions. People make decisions concerning their behavior based on their values. At the group level, values are scripts or cultural ideals held in common by members of a group. Values guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events. That is, values serve as standards or criteria.

Moral development vs. character formation

The connection between values/moral development and the role of education has been proved (Chowdhury, 2016; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984; Liu, 2014; Piaget 1932; Rogers, 1969).

It is important to stress that school is the most important location for character formation and moral education of children and young people since school age is the most active period for acquiring as well as transmitting the human values/morals. Character is not formed automatically, but is developed through good teaching and good example. Schools have always had a responsibility for both academic and character development. Behaviors, attitudes, and ideas that children gain in school, form the basis of the children's value judgments and development. Transferring social values and attitudes to young generations in a school medium requires providing value education via systematic and regular activities in the school medium (Nucci, 2001).

What is morality? Morality is viewed as the "system of rules that regulate the social interactions and social relationships of individuals within societies and is based on concepts of welfare (harm), trust, justice (comparative treatment and distribution) and rights" (Smetana, 1995).

This is how humans determine their actions based on their cognitive abilities to interpret a social situation. Issues of reasoning, problem solving skills, self-control and adaptability are components in exhibiting key components of the moral process.

Moral education is usually defined as a form of education that aims to promote students' moral development and character formation. Moral education is whatever schools do to influence how learners think, feel and act regarding issues of rights and wrong. Moral education has the task of enabling young people to respect the rights and freedom of others as much as their own.

Effective teaching for moral character aligns with best practice instruction for academic achievement. School has a definite and inevitable role to play in providing moral education. Dealing with moral education basically is reinforcing the values practiced at home and in society.

In this sense, teachers are very influential and significant adults in the lives of children. Teachers help children to understand and judge themselves and others based upon higher levels of morality.

Educators and teachers are the key persons for beneficial structuring of the atmosphere in a school which will support the development of value orientations, the faculty of judgment and the ability to undertake moral reflection. Based on theoretical and practical knowledge and experience, teachers have to develop a variety of means to morally stimulate adolescents and make them committed to moral action. It requires of teachers to display the willingness, models of good behavior, resourcefulness and creativity to stimulate young people into the ongoing process of moral action and reflection.

Summarily, moral development takes place and values/morals can be imported and developed through the medium of education. School is the most important location to foster such changes in children and adolescents. Schools are institutions for preparing new generations for life, both academically and as moral agents in society.

Method

Research Design

This study was planned as an experimental model. In this study, experimental design with a pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire in the experimental and control group was used. This model was chosen because this study attempted to make comparisons in terms of values/moral development levels between adolescents who were in the experiment groups (in which, additionally to textbooks, films were used) and in the control groups (in which no such intervention was used). Experimental design provides opportunities to make comparisons like this. Pre-questionnaires were filled in before the implementation process, as well as post-questionnaires after the implementation.

Instruments

From the video library of the educational program “One World in Schools in Georgia” three documentaries dubbed in the Georgian language were selected. When selecting the films, the following criteria were taken into account:

- Compliance of films and lesson duration
- Compliance of film topics with the topics (civic education, history, geography) determined under the social sciences subject group program of the National Curriculum for secondary education level (9-12 grades).

With this in mind, the selected films included the following topics:

- Human rights
- Environment protection
- Acceptance /tolerance /migration
- Civil activism
- Conflicts
- Education
- Bullying

A questionnaire was developed as the instrument of the quantitative research. The designed questionnaire focused on revealing the respondents' attitude and disposition since the disposition is directly related to evaluation and explores the emotional attitude of respondents to the given issue. The questionnaire covered a total of 51 positive and negative items. These items are grouped for analysis purposes in seven main categories, according to above mentioned topics. Each category includes 6 to 9 items, which measure the respondent's attitude towards the issues. The survey of the respondents based on the questionnaire was carried out by Likert scale. The respondents had to provide their evaluation according to a 5-point scale to demonstrate their attitude: "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Not sure," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree". Each answer was assigned its point: 1 point to "Strongly agree" and 5 point to "Totally disagree".

The socially acceptable responses by questionnaire items were identified in advance, both for positive and negative statements. Thus, responses to each item of the questionnaire, regardless whether they fall into the "agree" or "disagree" category were considered as socially acceptable or unacceptable ones, according to the specific meaning of the item. For example, for the item N20 "I believe people should think more on the importance of environmental issues" the expected, acceptable answer falls into the "strongly agree" or "agree" categories and for the item N29 "The state is not obliged to adopt a law against discrimination, everyone can protect themselves to not become a victim of bullying" - "strongly disagree" or "agree" categories.

It should be noted that the ultimate objective of the study was to observe some changes in socially acceptable responses with experiment intervention, with 10-15% a statistically significant increase.

Research Participants

Two target schools were identified in Tbilisi. Table 2 illustrates this information.

N	Tbilisi
1.	Public School № 136
2.	Ilia Vekua Physics-Mathematical Public School № 42

Table 2. Target schools in Tbilisi

The respondents in this research were secondary school age (ages 15-17) students. In total, 204 participants took part in the survey. 204 students filled out the pre-questionnaire. From here, 9 participants dropped out of the experiment after pre-questionnaire due to absence from classes. Thus, 195 same participants filled out the post-questionnaire.

Process

This phase of the experiment included implementation of the planned intervention in schools, which means using the documentaries during the teaching process and post-screening activities.

During the first stage, in both schools, the selected 10th and 11th grade students (4 experimental and 4 control classes) filled out the pre-questionnaire. In total 204 students took part in the pre-questionnaire.

At the next stage, only the experimental classes of each school watched the selected documentary films and took part in post-screening activities on relevant topics. Each experimental class (4 classes) in each school was shown 3 documentaries three times, i.e., 6 screenings in 2 experimental classes of Public School N136 and 6 screenings in 2 experimental classes of Ilia Vekua Physics-Mathematics Public School № 42.

Thus, in 2 schools in total, 4 experimental classes watched documentary films 12 times, which were followed by respective activities. After the completion of each film screening, students were asked to join in different activities, which included self-reflection, discussion and appropriate exercises over the topics rendered in the films.

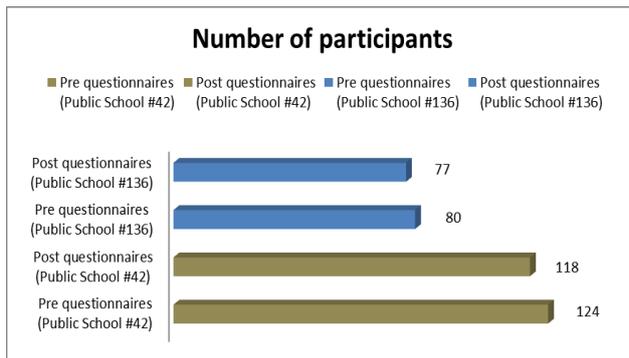
Thus, the intervention in the experimental classes included both screening of the films and the activities around the relevant issues during the lesson process that promoted more active involvement of students and their understanding of the issues in many ways.

In the post-questionnaire 195 students (the same 4 experimental and 4 control classes) were questioned in both schools. Here, it is important to note that the answer sheets of participants who dropped out of the experiment were eliminated in statistics (thus, eventually 195 answer sheets for pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire were assessed).

The questionnaire was anonymous, but was coded with the special symbols of each participant (e.g. initials of own and parents' first names, birth date, gender, age). Thus, identification of those 9 students who did not complete the post-questionnaire was possible.

Data analysis and results

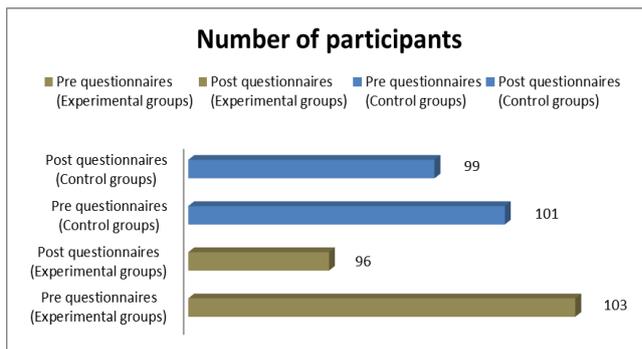
SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 16 version was used for data analysis. For data processing descriptive statistic methods were used. The total number of surveyed participants at pre- and post-questionnaires in two target schools are shown below. See graph 1.



Graph 1. Distribution of Respondents by schools in pre-and post questionnaires

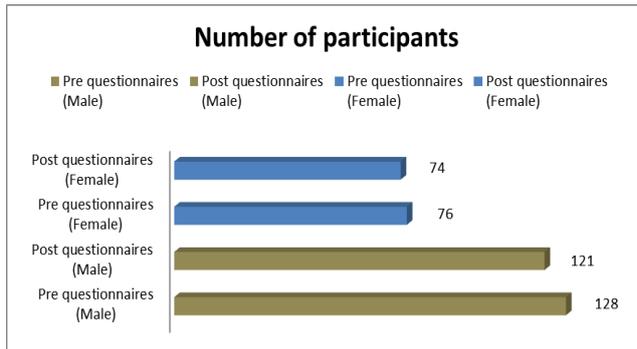
Below, graph 2 presents the distribution of the respondents by allocation to experimental and control groups. It appears that the quantitative difference in groups is statistically insignificant, which leads to a higher reliability of experiment results.

The experimental groups as well as the control groups included 10th and 11th grade classes of both schools.



Graph 2. Distribution of Respondents by allocation to experimental and control groups

Graph 3 indicates the distribution of respondents by sex. The number of male and female respondents at pre and post-questionnaires were almost the same in the experiment.



Graph 3. Distribution of Respondents by Sex

In the study, significant differences were found between the values/moral development at pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire points with the experiment groups. It was determined that values/moral development levels of the adolescents who participated in the intervention (experimental groups) were significantly higher in the post-questionnaire results than those of the adolescents who did not participate in intervention (control groups). There was not a significant difference at pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire points of the control groups. Thus, results of control groups in the experiment remained almost the same without the intervention, while the results of the experimental groups compared to the control groups showed evident differences in pre and post questionnaire stages.

The distribution of socially acceptable responses in the experimental groups looks so: 76.83% out of all answers in pre-questionnaire and 98.96% at post-questionnaire. This indicates that their socially acceptable answers increased by 22.13%, which, definitely, is statistically significant.

See below table 3. In control group the results in post-questionnaire differ only by 0.21%, which, certainly, is statistically insignificant.

	Experimental groups	
	Pre- questionnaires	Post -questionnaires
Socially acceptable answers		
Experimental groups	76.83%	98.96%
Control groups	75.05	75.26

Table 3. Distribution of socially acceptable responses by experimental groups in pre- and post-questionnaires

At the same time, females in both the experimental and the control groups showed an increase of socially acceptable responses in the post-questionnaires compared to the pre-questionnaires (in the experimental groups a significant increase, while in the control – a minor one), while no such increase was found for males in the control groups. See tables 4 and 5.

Socially acceptable responses	Pre-questionnaires	Post - questionnaires
Females in experimental groups	76,35%	99,54%
Females in control groups	75,84%	76, 87%

Table 4. Distribution of socially acceptable responses by sex (females) in pre and post-questionnaires

Socially acceptable responses	Pre-questionnaires	Post - questionnaires
Males in experimental groups	77,27%	98,36%
Males in control groups	75,42%	75,43%

Table 5. Distribution of socially acceptable responses by sex (male) in pre and post-questionnaires

The data obtained from the research shows the effectiveness of the intervention. The difference of results between the control and experimental groups as well as the results of the experimental groups before and after the intervention revealed that using of documentaries is an efficient approach to Social Sciences instruction in schools. The study agrees with other researches in the same field (Dressel, 1990, Cortes & Thompson, 1990) and tries to contribute to the future application of the method in practice in Georgian secondary schools.

Conclusion

To conclude, the survey has revealed a significant difference in values/moral development levels between respondents' results before and after the intervention (by 22.13%), while in control group, without such an intervention, by 0.21%, which is an insignificant change. It proves that audiovisual aids, specifically, documentaries represent a great way of demonstrating to students positive and realistic role models, supporting their value development and personal growth through self-reflection, discussions and various activities which are related to films' topics.

Applying documentaries in social sciences instruction in schools is more than traditional on-paper + lecturing way of teaching. The method raises young people's awareness about the challenges of today's world and current social issues, to think critically and to formulate questions and educated opinions about relevant issues as well as cultivate a sense of responsibility that will actively encourage them to contribute to addressing current social problems.

By using the medium of film, the method gives the students the chance to interact with others, share their opinions and form better understanding of social issues. The documentary films present an effective tool for teaching/learning students social sciences (Civic education, History and Geography) as well as they might be easily applied to other subject curricula at high school level.

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