Using Film to Elucidate Leadership Effectiveness Models: Reflection on Authentic Learning Experiences

Diana Rajendran
Swinburne University of Technology, drajendran@swin.edu.au

Martin Andrew
Victoria University, Melbourne, martin.andrew@vic.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp

Using Film to Elucidate Leadership Effectiveness Models: Reflection on Authentic Learning Experiences

Abstract

Abstract This paper examines how students in a third year management unit at a university of technology in Australia evaluate the usefulness of film as a tool for developing a deeper understanding of the theoretical leadership effectiveness model developed by Robbins (1997). The study reviews the range of studies describing the use of films in teaching leadership, playing into a perceivable gap in empirical studies demonstrating how students engage in applying the concepts of leadership. This study specifically considers whether films are effective interventions for achieving engagement in an assessment task aimed at identifying applications of theory to cases of leadership in action. As part of an action research cycle, thirty students (30) participated in three different focus groups. Transcriptions subsequently produced thick descriptions on which thematic analysis was conducted to extract key themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The results suggest that films can communicate, embody and articulate the effectiveness of behaviours of leadership Robbins conveyed. The results also indicate that students value films as a medium for contextualising actions that demonstrate different leadership styles. It is perceived as a way of catering to diverse learning styles and as a way of building autonomy. We conclude that while films can be motivating and lend authenticity to assessment tasks, students need clear direction in making links between theoretical concepts and narrative filmic constructions of leaders and leadership behaviour. This leads to the next stage of our action research cycle.

Introduction

This paper analyses the value of using a film in an assessment task to build deep learning about Robbins's (1997) leadership-effectiveness model for third-year management students at a university of technology in Melbourne, Australia. The study involved 30 participants, and focused on the questions:

- How do students see films as an effective intervention for achieving engagement in an assessment task that applies the theoretical construct of Robbins's leadership-effectiveness model to leadership in action?

- In what ways can the use of films in the contexts of assessing leadership be used to make learning in management programs more authentic?

Using thickly descriptive data from the transcriptions of post-assessment focus-group interviews, the study evaluates the pedagogical and learning value of film as a substitute for commonly used teaching interventions such as case studies, researched evaluations of particular leaders or work placements. The study is informed by the unique ways to teach concepts related to leadership through films discussed in the literature review below. However, there is little student-centred, empirical research within an action-research framework that uses the principles of authentic learning to demonstrate how films help students engage with and apply the concepts of leadership. This study contributes to educational practice by using the voices of the students themselves to evaluate the effectiveness of films as mirrors to provide a context within which to apply leadership theory.

In the unit Leadership and Management, students were required to select and use scenes from films, specifically *Thirteen Days* (directed by Roger Donaldson, 2000), *Gandhi* (directed by Richard Attenborough, 1982) and *Elizabeth* (directed by Shekhar Kapur, 1998), to discuss different facets and types of leadership, and to identify moments where leadership traits were evident. The examples of leadership within these films were perceived to be a reasonable substitute for the complex "real life" leadership situations of role-plays, case studies or on-site placements, and therefore to be appropriate for real-world learning experiences. Given the emphasis on analytical skills in the employment market, we believe an analytic task using authentic (albeit scripted) texts is appropriate. In this assessment exercise students worked individually outside the class.

Background to the study

Rationale

Our choice of films as a way to engage students with leadership theory was determined by the nature of the student cohort in our campus. First, cohorts in general comprise students with minimum VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) scores; this poses a pedagogical challenge to create opportunities for engagement in assessment. Second, normally about 20% of students in the cohort are from a non-English-speaking background (NESB). By capitalising on their expected high levels of filmic literacy, teaching and learning using film allows NESB students to engage effectively with complexity (Andrew 2006). Our third consideration in the use and choice of films was in response to previous cohorts' feedback. Recent student evaluations revealed discontent with "boring" case-study approaches to presenting textual information about leadership. Therefore,

the teachers wanted to seek a more motivating way to introduce real-world simulations into their pedagogy and assessment.

This desire to create authentic pedagogical environments is also supported by research, notably Hunt (2001) and Senge et al. (1994). Their arguments emphasise that teachers should be creators of promising environments that allow students to learn as much, and with as much discipline depth and real-world applicability, as possible. As Serva and Fuller (2004) report, films demonstrably provide a rich source of information for analysis and reflection and enhance students' learning experiences.

A fourth factor in the decision to use films concerned the need to integrate cultural understanding into the program, particularly considering the increasingly multicultural student body. As faculties have begun to better cater to students' cultural and personal diversity and acknowledge their individual differences as pedagogical assets, cross-cultural contexts have become crucial in teaching (Thomas 2007). Applying insights from critical pedagogies, classrooms need to embody safe houses that value the identities of their participants (Canagarajah 2004). A variety of cross-culturally appropriate pedagogical methods and approaches need to be adopted to engage students and reflect the diverse ways our students learn. As Andrew (2006) and Mallinger and Rossy (2003) have demonstrated, films are a uniquely rich medium for embodying cultures.

Selection of films

Since films are in fact scripted enactments and constructions, they need to have a high level of verisimilitude and the appearance of authenticity. This is because the films need to stand in for "texts" that students might otherwise encounter in case studies, experiential outcomes or work placements. Research supporting this claim includes Champoux (1999), who maintains that scenes from a well-acted and well-directed film present material more dramatically and engagingly than a printed case study (p209). The three specific films were chosen in this study because they were historical in genre and represented a diverse range of leaders (American, Indian, English; two male leaders and one female leader), settings and leadership styles. The potential of film to portray such diversity is one of its strengths (Liles 2007). Movies also present an authentic, real-world range of what Gee (1991) calls "discourses": ways of being and speaking (Andrew, 2006). Students can access (and be apprentices to) the kinds of language actually practised in past and present leadership contexts.

While there are many suitable films that included issues of leadership (for example, *The Iron Lady*, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, 2011), the following films were selected.

Thirteen Days depicts John F. Kennedy's interaction in the Cuban nuclear crisis of 1962. It hinges on the imminence of war between the United States and the former USSR and revolves around political leaders from both countries. We witness these leaders negotiating and planning for a military stand-off and strategising about necessary action. We observe President Kennedy using a variety of leadership styles to manage his people and the crisis. This film comes recommended by Buchanan and Huczynski (2004), who have also explored the use of films in management education.

Gandhi's name is familiar to most students as the leader of the non-violent movement for India's independence. The movie portrays his achievements even though he failed to achieve national unity. Set during British colonial rule in South Africa and India, the movie traces Gandhi's

involvement in socio-political changes. The situational circumstances bring out his sensitivity, tenacity and resilience and it is clear how he inspired and motivated his followers through compassion.

Elizabeth shows the Virgin Queen's development as a monarch over 45 years and revolves around Cate Blanchett's powerful central portrayal. It depicts the complex relationship between Elizabeth's personal and political life and her strong personality, diplomatic skills and ability to provide her subjects with an intimate gratification. Although it is ideologically fraught, the film reveals Elizabeth as a model of an independent woman while displaying her shrewd understanding of the importance of political propaganda and manipulation.

The leadership-effectiveness model

The year - three unit Leadership and Management forms part of a human-resources management/management major stream of units within a Bachelor of Business degree. The unit is designed to facilitate a culture of open-mindedness and reflection. Student learners have the opportunity to direct their own learning through the experience of self-management and self-leadership. The course achieves this by creating a learning culture where learners prioritise their own time and invest in course outcomes, and by encouraging students to take ownership of a specific task through active learning. During the management unit, students were taught about the leadership-effectiveness model over an eight-week period before taking part in the film-focussed individual assessment task. Students participated in an assessment task aimed at applying Robbins's (1997) leadership-effectiveness model to one of the three film texts. The framework appears in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Framework for Understanding Leadership
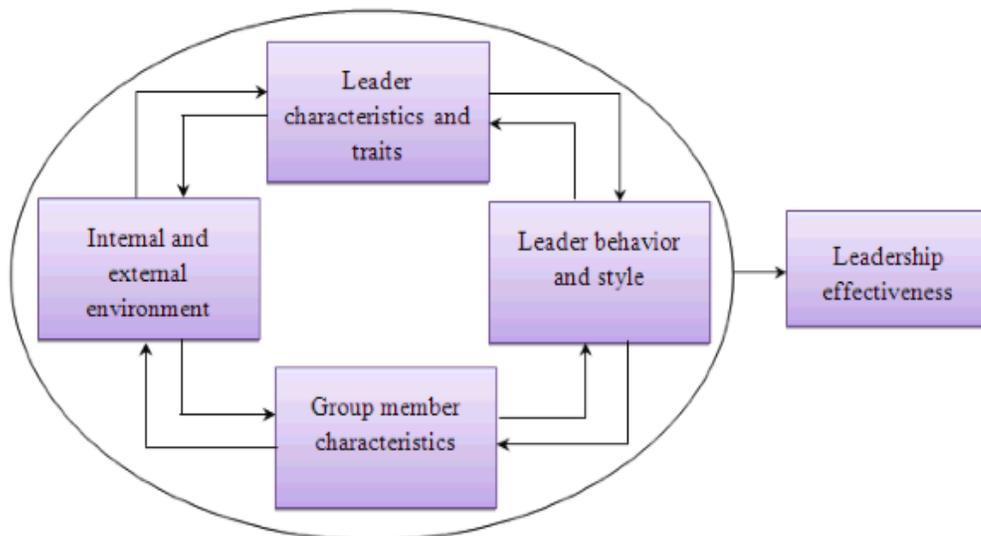
Adapted from: Robbins (1997), Managing Today, in DuBrin (2010, p21).

This framework suggests that a leader's effectiveness is influenced by four factors: leadership characteristics and traits; leader behaviour and style; group member characteristics; and internal and external environment. These four factors are interrelated and can affect each other. Collectively, they are considered influential in determining the effectiveness of the leader.

The task

It is a commonplace goal of assessment tasks that, as Gibbs (2006) suggests, they capture all expressions of learning behaviour. Thus, assessments need to be articulated explicitly. Students were instructed to write a well-researched report critically appraising the effectiveness of leadership as portrayed in their selected movie. They were required to apply Robbins's (1997) framework for assessing leadership effectiveness to structure their analysis. They were encouraged to read widely about leadership effectiveness beyond their textbook and to analyse actions, incidents and behaviours in the film in the light of their learning. Students were informed that they were expected to synthesise examples of leadership from the films with the theoretical constructs and careful reflection on the leadership concepts from their earlier learning. They were also expected to identify and critically analyse specific episodes evident in the film to justify the effectiveness of the leader chosen for analysis.

Literature review

Before discussing research that identifies the pedagogical benefits of using movies in management studies, it is useful to outline three concepts underpinning our use of film as a vehicle for real-world assessment with our cohort: authenticity, autonomy and reflectivity.

Authentic learning, autonomy and reflection

Authentic learning, bridging the world of learning environments and the real world (Herrington et al., 2003), was crucial to the design of Leadership and Management. We concur with Kreber et al. (2007) in viewing authenticity as having the capacity to empower learners, to make them "more integrated, more fully human, more aware, and more content with their personal and professional lives" (p24). We also found support in Stein, Isaacs and Andrews (2004), who argue that when students can find meaningful connection within their current views by engaging themselves by living those experiences, their learning experiences become authentic. The extensive work of Champoux also influenced our desire to create authentic learning spaces via film in management education. In a 1999 article, he suggests that the use of films in teaching management can affect learning due to their experiential nature. Sridar and Sridar (1993) similarly assert that films have the potential to expose students to the "real world" by providing linkages to curricular topics.

Building autonomy into real-world tasks is crucial in that it can help develop students' analytical skills (Champoux 1999). The use of well-chosen films as case studies is an instance of a teaching intervention that plays into this space, as it validates students' abilities to construct responses to filmic texts through the power of the imagination. Boyatzis (1995, cited in Rhee 2003, p569) argues that we learn most effectively when we are in control of the learning process, and "can choose developmental activities best suited to [our] personal situation". Further, Bluestone (2000) makes the point that the use of feature films also allows students to grasp concepts in a real-world contextual setting, allowing them to use critical thinking much more than when using textbooks or educational films.

A further key pedagogical intervention for stimulating learners' metacognitive awareness and promoting academic literacies is the teaching of reflective thinking and the encouragement of reflective practice in assessment contexts (Schön 1987). Learning takes place not only from undergoing the experience, but also from reflecting upon it (Arievitch & Haenen 2005). Reflection plays a key role in embedding the knowledge in experience explicit to the learner (Schön 1987). Reflectivity was also methodologically important to the study since in focus groups, that were subsequently conducted, students were encouraged to reflect on how the films affected their own learning.

Using films to teach management

A great deal has been written on the use of film in tertiary pedagogy in general (Andrew 2006; Buchanan & Huczynski 2004; Holbrook 2008; Liles 2007), much of it generally pertinent to the current study. While discussing the use of films for intercultural learning, Cardon (2010) posits that films engage the audience more intensely and can leave deeper impressions than other media. The reason for this could be, as Tidwell (2001) explains, that films promote visualisation of theory. Huczynski and Buchanan (2004) have observed that films can be regarded either as entertainments that reflect reality or as cultural artefacts that "shape and constitute our understanding of social and organisational life" (p708). This is important, as it allows the students to view films as artefacts of a given culture, not merely as prescriptive texts.

The literature review on film and education focuses on how films enhance pedagogy and student engagement and learning in management. A range of researchers has thoroughly documented particular uses of full films in teaching such management-related concepts as leadership (Billsbery & Edwards 2008; Champoux 2001, 2005; Clemens & Wolff 2000; Harrington & Griffin 1990; Harrison & Akinc 2000; Rosser 2007) and organisational behaviour (Ambrosini, Billsberry & Collier 2009; Buchanan & Huczynski 2004; Bumpus 2005; Champoux 1999; Kernodle 2009; Reddin 1996; Tyler, Anderson & Tyler 2009). Among these studies, there is consensus that films offer "more dramatic, more intense and more dynamic representations of organisation than management texts" (Hassard & Holliday 1998, p1). These and other writers have identified a variety of benefits that film-based pedagogies bring to the classroom and these are summarised below.

Champoux (1999) identifies significant benefits brought to the teaching and learning environment via film. In his 1999 article, he observes that film offers a visual portrayal of abstract theories, including specific "concepts taught in organisational behaviour and management course[s]" (p206). The same study posits the idea that the pedagogical use of films enhances the learning process in ways other media cannot. It achieves this by illustrating themes in a way that is both memorable and entertaining. Champoux suggests that film can be used in management pedagogy in several ways: as a case study, for problem-solving; to demonstrate metaphor; to provide satirical exaggeration; to communicate symbolically; to give substance to abstract concepts; to provide vicarious experience; and to illustrate historical events. In a later paper, Champoux goes as far as to assert that film is "unequalled" in its ability to hold and direct a viewer's attention (2005). Champoux is equally tenacious about the ability of films "to captivate examples of characteristics and dramatise many concepts in Management and Organisational Behaviour" (2001, p98).

The advantages of using film to teach management

A wide variety of literature is available that supports the extensive use of films to teach management courses. With reference to particular advantages of using film to focus teaching and assessment in leadership, this section presents a brief review of this literature.

One major theme that emerges in the literature is film's capacity for engagement, and hence its role in student retention. Particularly for televisually saturated information-age learners, film is likely to improve retention by providing strong images and emotional content (Bumpus 2005; Cardon 2010; Champoux 1999; Gioia & Brass 1985; Huczynski & Buchanan 2004; Hunt 2001; Serva & Fuller 2004). Given they belong to the world of leisure as well as that of study, films engage students as a familiar, attention-capturing, visual medium (Mallinger & Rossy 2003). They are, then, likely to improve retention by providing strong images and emotional content (Rosser 2007; Scherer & Baker 1999).

We have already mentioned a second important idea that runs through the research: film's capacity to promote a learner's a sense of visualisation. As Liles (2007) has demonstrated, films are effective in engaging students in particular topics because students relate to the filmic medium itself. For this reason, teaching and learning using films appeals to a range of learning styles. Specifically, films provide a familiar attention-capturing visual medium to engage the student (Tyler, Anderson & Tyler 2009). Further, the work of Ambrosini, Billsberry and Collier (2009) indicates that using films in teaching and learning helps students *remember* course ideas. This study concurs with Short and Ketchen's (2005) insight that within scaffolded pedagogies, using films can serve as a memory-trigger device. Hunter (1990) has gone further, maintaining that such pedagogies can offer a transcendent experience, and thus create a sense of engagement with filmic events. In another study, Hauenstein and Riddle (2003) have shown that use of film clips promotes the visualisation of theoretically complex concepts.

A third benefit of using films to teach and assess management lies in its ability to transmit tacit knowledge. Films can help to create a cognitive bridge between concepts "learned" in the classroom and observed in a film. In short, the use of film can effectively provoke "aha" moments. For instance, they can show that people do not always make decisions as the result of rational analysis and, conversely, that rational decisions are not always wise or the best course of action (Ambrosini, Billsberry & Collier 2009).

Crucially, researchers report that films are a ready medium for observing theory in action. Film scenes can offer a visual portrayal of abstract theories and concepts taught on organisational behaviour and management courses (Champoux, 2005). Films can essentially be used as a practical application of theory (such as Robbins's) in which decisions are seen as they unfold and interpersonal interactions have immediate and visible consequences (English & Steffy 1997; Malloch & Callahan 2009). By creating experiences to which students can relate, films help illustrate concepts in action (Ambrosini, Billsberry & Collier 2009). Bumpus (2005) writes that due to the nature of the field of management and organisational behaviour, core concepts and theories can be mirrored by film-focussed instruction. A specific aspect of film's ability to present and embody theoretical ideas is their portrayal of real-world untidiness as opposed to text-book orderliness (Armstrong & Fukami 2010; Huczynski & Buchanan 2004). The complexities and conflicts of real-world organisation can be depicted – and noticed – in filmic depictions of leadership because they are features of the untidy, disorganised real world.

Methodology

Action research

This project developed from the classroom-based problem of how to teach and assess Robbins's (1997) framework in a way that would engage the diverse abilities and learning styles in the student cohort. For this reason, it was decided that implementing an action-research (AR cycle was appropriate. As is typical with action research, the research process identified transformative change. It also provided an avenue for reflective learning for the teacher, and afforded a basis for practical implementation of constructivist pedagogic change for the program of the sort described by Choi (2011). Our cycle accorded with Little's (2012) description: "as teachers continue to teach, implement new methods and resources, and reflect on the results, the goal is to improve student learning" (p70). The following table, based on the four phases characterising action research (Little 2012), demonstrates the process of action research.

Table 1: Application of Action Research in the Project

Stages of the action-research cycle	Action in the project
Identifying a classroom problem	Noticing students' lack of engagement in teaching and learning of the leadership model
Developing and implementing an action-research plan	Designing an intervention using films as the basis for teaching and assessing the leadership model and improving engagement
Collecting and analysing data	Designing a research project using student voices to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention
Using and sharing results	Analysing data, drawing conclusions and preparing to implement further improvements

Action research is a cycle, so there are implications for creating a more focussed and specific project during future iterations of the unit.

Data collection

Students were invited to participate in focus groups of up to 10 participants, lasting 45 minutes to an hour. They were encouraged to share their reflections on and learning experiences from the major assignment completed in the unit Leadership and Management. This task involved seeing *Elizabeth, Gandhi* or *Thirteen Days* and analysing and critically evaluating the leadership behaviour of the chief protagonist in terms of a specific (Robbins 1997) leadership-effectiveness model. Focus-group discussions were audio-recorded, and the researcher also took notes during the discussion. Examples of questions used for the focus groups included:

- How does the use of movies as a basis for assessment compare with other assessment tasks in this unit and other management units?
- How are movies a valuable (or less than valuable) basis for assessment?
- Did the use of movies allow you to use the leadership-effectiveness model to understand what affects a person's ability to lead effectively?

- In what other ways could you be asked to demonstrate your understanding and ability to use the leadership-effectiveness model?

Data analysis

The focus-group interviews were transcribed and analysed by the second researcher (who was not involved in the teaching of the course) using "theoretical sensitivity" (Ryan & Bernard 2003, p88). This is a flexible variation on common grounded methodological approaches (Strauss & Corbin 1990; Glaser 1998). Theoretical sensitivity involves seeking key themes by identifying common understandings and viewpoints, but recognises the limitations inherent in small data samples (30 respondents) and data that is reflective and self-reported. This method draws on "word-based" and "scrutiny-based" techniques of readerly observation (Ryan & Bernard 2003), and is commonly used in such disciplines as nursing, where the stories of individuals are more important than the number of instances of particular utterances. This holistic, instinctive, multiple-technique method brings out "indigenous" themes (Patton 1990) to the reader, whose theoretical sensitivity builds a sense of themes emerging from the focus-group data.

Borrowing from Sandelowski's (1995) application of theoretical sensitivity, we used a method of closely reading the material, identifying key storylines to understand students' reported practices. We methodically underlined key phrases "because they make some as yet inchoate sense" (Sandelowski 1995, p373). Our qualitative method consciously drew on other analytic tools such as Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "constant comparison method" (pp101-116).

Using these methods of readerly observation and theoretical sensitivity broadly, we then grouped the quotations from the data under key thematic categories. Categories emerged quantitatively. The most significant quotations have been presented in our findings to illustrate these themes.

Findings

A range of key themes emerged from analysing the data; the most significant ones are discussed here. The first is the idea that the visual dimension caters to students with different learning styles and leads to easier memorisation. The second is the idea that movies contextualise actions that are symptomatic of specific leadership styles, creating quasi-authentic contexts in which leadership facets can be observed and understood. The third theme is that the use of film can lead to learner autonomy. We will describe the pedagogical proviso that teaching concepts or models with film needs clear pre-teaching of that broad concept, and mention difficulties that students described. The following draws on representative student voices from the focus-group discussion.

Theme 1: Advantages of the visual dimension

Twenty-two students commented that film's visual dimensions better suited their visual learning orientation and that presentation in an imagistic form positively affected their ability to remember aspects of Robbins's leadership framework. In a nutshell, one student said*: "*The movie illustrated examples of leadership in a visual, simple-to-understand to medium which could be directly linked to the leadership effectiveness model".

Interestingly, two students also commented that the activity improved their listening. These may have been international students, as one learner observed, "Movies are a good approach to extend the learning texts from life, especially for international students."

Students also indicated that:

- *Visualising a theory on film is easier to reconceptualise than lecture notes.*
- *Movies allow students to think out of the box.*
- *Films offer "a visual aid in applying the theory".*

Students indicated that they were aware of their own learning processes. The following is a typical comment: "Students like to watch-learn-apply instead of [the] read-learn-apply method".

In the context of valuing film as a mnemonic pedagogy, students also made negative comments about more commonly used modes of learning and assessment in management studies:

- *Exams and reading books do not facilitate my understanding of concepts.*
- *Watching a theory on film is easier to reconceptualise than lecture notes.*
- *Movies help to give you a visual representation of the theories/concepts which you don't often gain from reading a textbook.*
- *By watching, the film images were stuck in my mind, but by just reading, students tend to forget elements, e.g. case studies.*
- *[Films give a] richer information base to the leader through image and film [provides a] more attractive learning style. Basically some of the management assessments are very dull and boring – they lack real-life practices.*

The following four extracts provide typical contexts for students' micro narratives that praised the visual medium and its potential for them to look into authentic (albeit fictional) worlds, witness features of the model, make cognitive links and draw inferences.

- *I was able to recall specific examples and visualise everything rather than memorising notes.... I think it gives students who aren't as good at analysing written documents a chance to do very well. You are also able to witness for yourself how group members bring out different skills in a person.*
- *It is a new way to learn to analyse leadership behaviours and traits …provides visual behaviours to analyse rather than reading case studies …allows the viewer to observe followers, body language and behaviours and show how a leader is effective based on reactions of followers.*
- *Using movies made it easier to understand the different leadership styles, characteristics of theories that were in the textbook. We were learning by linking theories to Gandhi's actions and behaviour. The viewer is watching and trying to link leadership characteristics.*
- *I thought using the movie as an assignment to learn more about the different leadership styles and characteristics was very helpful, as I was able to link theories from the textbook to the movie.... I linked the components to Gandhi's actions in the movie. It provided me a better understanding of the model as [I] myself had to look for parts in the movie and had to use Gandhi as an example for each component, which made it easier to understand.*

Theme 2: Movies contextualise actions demonstrative of leadership styles

Theme 1 revealed the representational power of film to embody lived behaviours and contextualised actions and decisions. Theme 2, present in 20 students' utterances, moved beyond visual power to films' ability to depict historical environments and moments and to enact behaviours and turning points. Many students made general comments about films showing "leadership theories in a more lively form", movies embodying "a good way of seeing theory put into a real-life context" or about being able to make a link to the theory; approximately half backed up their claims with instances from the film/texts. The films used in this unit not only contained facets of Robbins's (1997) model, but dramatised examples in realistically recreated contexts. Students described how the films offered them the opportunity to make connections to the model:

- *When I watch the movie, I actually link some of the actions of Queen Elizabeth to what I've learned, such as her personality traits and how they affect her leadership style.*
- *The movie helped me understand the leadership-effectiveness model by providing examples of certain leadership traits, characteristics and behaviours that could be linked to the model.*
- *The movie described the internal and external environment and characteristics of the leader, which showed the importance and influences of them to the leadership effectiveness.*
- *By breaking up the model into parts and then assessing the movie with this, I was able to better understand the model and what in fact contributes to effective leadership.*

The following extended extracts are cited because they clearly demonstrate students' understanding of a film's potential to dramatise key moments and events that characterise leadership traits and behaviours.

- *The movie portrayed the personal characteristics through what the [character] says or does, thus as a student of leadership and management we can relate the characteristics to the leadership-effectiveness model, thus allowing students to evaluate the ability to lead.*

- *Movies show every character's perspective and the environments that affect their behaviour.... We can see how group members and the internal and external environments can affect the way they behave and adapt.... Movies give you so much more detail into the characters and you really get to understand how the internal and external environments can either positively or negatively affect a person's behaviour and style.*

- *The leadership-effectiveness model allows us to see that a leader is affected internally and externally. They also need leadership characteristics that they are either born with or taught over time. It shows that for one to be an effective leader there must be balance between their characteristics and style, considering too the environment of the people they work with.*

To unpack these findings, our students were able to clearly identify almost all the characteristics and/or traits of the leaders while analysing one of the key dimensions of leadership effectiveness in their assessment. To be specific, while analysing John F. Kennedy in *Thirteen Days,* several students pointed out how assertive and authoritative Kennedy is reputed to be by

citing "I have authority! I am the commander in Chief of the United States, and I say when we go to war!" and "Listen, you tell them those chains of command end at one place: me!". The students who chose *Gandhi* clearly linked the facet "authenticity" to the leader by citing the "train altercation" in South Africa and the Amritsar massacre. Students related how Gandhi sought and stood up for equity, justice, fairness and rights, and "*modelled the way*" of non-violence and toleration regardless of one's colour, origin, occupation and educational background. Likewise, while analysing *Elizabeth* for the Queen's effectiveness, her "vision", "tough mindedness" and "courage" were commented on. Elizabeth I was described as demonstrating her vision for England by professing to have the "heart of a man" despite significant opposition and her early struggle. Students added the trait "Machiavellian" when identifying the shifts the character made in her approach and style.

Theme 3: Movies build autonomy and agency

Amongst the metacognitive benefits of using films as a pedagogic lens is its ability to provide listening exercises for NESB students: one student referred to the strategy of "pausing and replaying", and another to the value of translated subtitles to enable bilingual comprehension. Commenting on a new skill, one student announced she could now "apply it to other movies to better understand the leaders, leading to a better understanding of the leadership-effectiveness model". The most significant metacognitive by-product of the assessment that students reported, though, was to build both autonomy, here realised as the ability to apply theory to film independently (seven comments), and agency, which in this context might refer to an ability to use the skills of the assessment in the real world (nine students). The following observations reflect the latter:

- *The use of movies gave me the ideas of how to lead effectively and use the model to carry out my task in the workforce if I was leading a team of people.*
- *The movie helped me understand the leadership-effectiveness model more because I got to search for the example of the model myself. This helped and gave me extra knowledge of the model and helped me visualise how leadership is used in reality.*
- *Movies point out the leaders' quality in the workplace, so I can apply this to what I learned in this unit and keep it in mind to use in the future.*
- *I think it's relevant in management as a lot of the time you're analysing people's verbal and non-verbal behaviours, not just written text. It made me think harder about each aspect and added a lot of depth to my understanding of the model.*
- *It allows for practical learning that the student is not just relating to theory but is watching the theory expand into reality (even though the actors are acting out the story).*

Theme 4: The need for pre-teaching (and other difficulties)

While the first three themes encapsulate some of the key reported benefits of using film for illustrating aspects of the model, a few informants indicated provisos or drawbacks. One student maintained, "After watching the movie several times, you tend to associate leadership styles more easily (given you understand the theory)." The chief proviso, implicit in the parentheses, is the need for the model to be explicitly pre-taught. Movies, another student said, "allow for the theory practised in class to be practised in [the] possible reality of a movie".

A third student stressed the need for advanced knowledge:

> *It requires that students have a strong background about the theory (leadership) first, and then they would be able to apply [it] to the movie. The theory must come first – the model shows the proper role of a person and without the model we are unable to know how effective people are as leaders.*

The students are clear about this pedagogical relation. This was observed in one of the reflections: "The leadership-effectiveness model helped to segment effective leadership into components, thus allowing for a thorough understanding of effective leadership which could be related to the movie."

In a more explicit instantiation of the pedagogical relation, one student had the following to say:

> *I thought using the movie as an assignment to learn more about the different leadership styles and characteristics was very helpful as I was able to link theories from the textbook to the movie.... I linked the components to Gandhi's actions in the movie. It provided me with a better understanding of the model as [I] myself had to look for parts in the movie and had to use Gandhi as an example for each component, which made it easier to understand.*

However, there is a clear desire in the responses quoted for the pre-teaching to be clearly articulated and explicit (five students) and for its applicability to film to be demonstrated in class as a preparation for the assignment (three requests).

There are also a few complaints: learning using film is time-consuming; it is linguistically challenging; it requires understanding of history and culture; it sometimes appears manufactured; it may be insufficient; and of course some students just read about the film. Further, four students expressed preferences for authentic assessments in actual workplaces; four others wanted the task complemented with in-class discussion, and another four commented that a researched case study could better complement or even replace the film study.

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, our study advocates the value of using films to enable students to critically analyse a leader as portrayed in *Thirteen Days*, *Elizabeth* or *Gandhi*. In particular, we elicited students' responses to applying aspects of Robbins's (1997) framework for understanding leadership within the films. The study, then, highlights the potential of films to enable students to respond to an assessment task by providing them with a motivating and visually oriented opportunity to exhibit their understanding – in this case, of the different dimensions of a leadership model. The visual dimension of film-oriented assessment proves a key benefit, as does its potential to portray actions and motivations identified by the model. We note, too, an additional benefit of film-based assessment: its potential to promote metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy.

Our findings align with Champoux's (1999) advocacy of the use of films to enhance the learning process in ways that are unavailable in written media. The study strengthens the claims made by Mallinger and Rossy (2003) and Scherer and Baker (1999) that films engage students more intensely as a familiar, attention-capturing visual medium, and can illustrate concepts in action by creating experience (Ambrosini et al. 2009).

Although traditional course materials such as text books, lecture notes and tutorial activities complement the individual learning process, we posit that using entire movies to contextualise the different dimensions of the leadership-effectiveness model provides an opportunity for more cybernative students to engage in self-directed learning process at their own pace. Our findings demonstrate that being able to apply learning to a quasi-real life scenario makes the learning process more meaningful and complete. They clearly support the view of Buchanan and Huczynski (2004), who claim that films help motivate students as they are fresh and unusual (in contrast to tired, old text-books). As Boyatzis (1995, cited in Rhee 2003, p569) argues, such events demonstrate the enhancement of students' analytical skills. The findings concur with Pierce et al. (1994), who claimed that through engaged self-leadership, students invest their efforts productively, become more operationally autonomous and take a greater sense of ownership of their educational experience.

Further, our findings propose that the use of films is one way to strengthen the pedagogy in courses such as Leadership and Management. Students do, however, need a class-time "trial run" in which they can practice cinematic literacies and through which lecturers can demonstrate the kinds of responses expected. Further, students, particularly the NESB contingent, do need to be persuaded to invest time and energy into a concentrated, applied, film-literacy task; our evidence and that of other studies (such as Andrew 2006) suggest that films are an excellent way of promoting listening and lexical strategies. Applying their learning to an assessment with a real-world context enables them to make better use of their learning as applied and authentic knowledge. This authenticity bridges the world of learning environments and the real world (Herrington et al. 2003). Teachers of management concepts can use filmic depictions to articulate the values, beliefs and attitudes of different leaders who have reshaped the way we live today. This use of film more closely engages learners, specifically those most familiar with online, internet-based interactions, and makes them more literate about critically analysing "authenticity" in leadership in the real world, and arguably in their futures as members of organisations and communities.

By investing in viewing the entire film, the students could place the leaders in historical contexts even as they applied leadership theory to today's workplaces. The act of viewing not only draws on learners' emotional responses and invites a visceral understanding, but also helps them actually perceive the facets of leadership identified only theoretically and descriptively in the abstract model. The visual dimension allows them to access information about leaders' behaviour, actions and decisions; to perceive their linguistic and communicative styles; and to identify key characteristics of leaders and their as well as followers. What they experience is leadership in action: theory made practical. Although the choice of movies rests with the course instructor, well-selected films offer a real-life connection, and using them in a focussed way adds value to learners' development of the kinds of analytical skills that characterise graduate attributes in management studies.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

We acknowledge that our sample size is relatively small, but argue that it is representative of our multi-cultural, cyber-generational cohorts. We also acknowledge that our methodology relies on self-reportage; we can better access learners' authentic thoughts and evaluations by overhearing their own words.

As a result of this study, our on-going action-research process identified some specific focus points for further exploration of the use of films in management education. We aim to evaluate the impact of explicitly teaching Robbins's concepts in application to a fourth film such as *The Iron Lady*. This enables us to respond to the need for a model or a run-through identified during the current action-research cycle. We can then demonstrate the kinds of connections that we hope students would make autonomously in their assessment tasks. In a forthcoming study, we will also consider the ways in which explicit teaching of listening and note-taking strategies can better enable NESB learners to access the linguistic and communicative content of films as they are used in the teaching of such units as Leadership and Management.

References

Ambrosini,V., Billsberry, J. & Collier, N. (2009). Teaching soft issues in strategic management with films: Arguments and suggestions. *International Journal of Management Education,* 8(1), 63-72.

Andrew, M. (2006). Speaking about film and learning about speaking: Teaching speaking through film study. *The TESOLANZ Journal,* 14, 16-31.

Arievitch, I. M. & Haenen, J. P. P. (2005). Connecting sociocultural theory and educational practice: Galperin's approach. *Educational Psychologist*, 40(3), pp155-165.

Armstrong, S. J. & Fukami, C. V. (2010). Self-Assessment of Knowledge: A cognitive learning or affective measure? Perspectives from the management learning and education community. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 9(2), 335-341.

Attenborough, R. (1982). *Gandhi* (motion picture), Columbia Pictures, United States.

Billsbery, J. & Edwards, G. (2008). Toxic Celluloid: Representations of bad leadership on film and implications for leadership development. *Organisations & People,* 15(3), 104-110.

Bluestone, C. (2000). Feature films as a teaching tool. *College Teaching*, 48, 141-146.

Boeckmann, M. A. & Dickinson, G. B. (2001). Leadership values and performance. *Education,* 121(3), 494-497.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1995). Cornerstones of change: building a path for self-directed learning. In Boyatzis, R. E., Cowen, S. S. & Kolb, D. A. (Eds), *Innovation in Professional Education*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Buchanan, D. & Huczynski, A. (2004). Images of influence: *12 Angry Men* and *Thirteen Days*. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 3(4), 312-323.

Bumpus, M. A. (2005). Using motion pictures to teach management: Refocusing the camera lens through the infusion approach to diversity. *Journal of Management Education*, 29, 792-815.

Callahan, J. L. & Rosser, M. H. (2007). Pop goes the program: Using popular culture artifacts to education leaders. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 9(2), 269-287.

Canagarajah, S. (2004). Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses and critical learning. In Norton, B. & Toohey, K. (Eds), *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Cardon, P. W. (2010). Using films to learn about the nature of cross-cultural stereotypes in intercultural business communication courses. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 73(2), 150-165.

Champoux, J. E. (1999). Film as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2), 206-217.

Champoux, J. E. (2001). Animated films as a teaching resource. *Journal of Management Education*, 25(1), 79-100.

Champoux, J. E. (2005). *Our Feature Presentation: Organisational Behaviour*, South-Western College Publishing, Mason, OH.

Choi, J. (2011). A Self-Study of the Teaching of Action Research in a University Context. *Studying Teacher Education*. Accessed on 20 February 2012 from http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cste20.

Clemens, JK & Wolff, M 2000, *Movies to manage by: Lessons in leadership from great films*, McGraw-Hill Education, New York.

Donaldson, R. (2000). *Thirteen Days* (motion picture), Beacon Pictures, United States.

Dubrin, A. J. (2011). *Leadership: Research Findings, Practice, and Skills*, South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason, OH.

English, F. & Steffy, B. (1997). Using Film to Teach Leadership in Educational Administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 33(1), 107-125.

Gee, J. P. (1991). A linguistic approach to narrative. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1, 15-39.

Gibbs, G. (2006). How assessment frames student learning. In Bryan, C. & Clegg, K. (Eds), *Innovative Assessment in Higher Education,* Routledge, London.

Gioia, D. A. & Brass, D. J. (1986). Teaching the T.V. Generation: The case for observational learning. *Organisational Behavior Teaching Review*, 10, 11-18.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine, Chicago.

Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA.

Harrington, K. & Griffin, W. (1990). Ripley, Burke, Gorman, and friends: Using the film "Aliens" to teach leadership and power. *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review,* 14(3), 79-86.

Harrison, J. K. & Akinc, H. (2000). Lessons in leadership from the arts and literature: a liberal arts approach to management education through fifth discipline learning. *Journal of Management Education*, 24, 391-413.

Hassard, J. & Holliday, R. (1998). *Organization-representation: Work and Organizations in Popular Culture*, Sage, London.

Hauenstein, N. & Riddle, D. (2003). Education and training in I-O Psychology. *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 41(1), 83-95.

Herrington, J. Oliver, R. & Reeves, T. C. (2003). Patterns of engagement in authentic online learning environments. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 19(1), 59-71.

Holbrook, R. L. Jr (2008). OB in a video box: Using *Remember the Titans* as a microcosm for the organisational behavior course, *Journal of Management Education*, 33(4), 490-513.

Huczynski , A. & Buchanan, D. (2004). Theory from fiction: A narrative process perspective on the pedagogic use of feature films. *Journal of Management Education*, 28, 702-726.

Hunt, C. S. (2001). Must-see TV: the timelines of television as a teaching tool. *Journal of Management Education*, 25, 631-647.

Kapur, S. (1998). *Elizabeth* (motion picture), Gramercy Pictures, United States.

Kernodle, T. (2009). Effective media use: Using film and television to instruct an organisational behaviour course. *American Journal of Business Education*, 2(8), 37- 49.

Liles, R. E. (2007). The use of feature films as teaching tools in social work education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 27(3/4), pp45-60.

Little, M. E. (2012). Action Research and Response to Intervention: Bridging the Discourse Divide. *The Educational Forum*, 76, 69-80.

Lloyd, P. (2011). *The Iron Lady* (motion picture), Pathé International, United Kingdom.

Mallinger, M. & Rossy, G. (2003). Film as a lens for teaching culture: Balancing concepts, ambiguity, and paradox. *Journal of Management Education*, 27, 608-624.

Malloch, H. & Callahan, J. L. (2009). The use of film and TV in teaching HRD concepts: A primer. Accessed 5 March 2012 from http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/9-16-refereed-paper.pdf.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods.* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Reddin, W. J. (1966). Feature films for management development: Tunes of glory as a management style diagnosis exercise. *Training and Development Journal*, October, 18-24.

Rhee K. S. (2003). Self-directed learning: To be aware or not to be aware. *Journal of Management Education,* 27(5), 568-589.

Robbins, S. (1997). Managing Today. In Dubrin, A. J., *Leadership: Research findings, Practice and Skills,* Cengage Learning, South-Western, OH.

Rosser, M. H. (2007) The magic of leadership: An exploration of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 9(2), 236-250.

Ryan, GW & Bernard, HR 2003, Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods,* 15(1), 85-109.

Sandelowski, M. (1995). Qualitative analysis: What it is and how to begin. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 18, 371-375.

Scherer, R. F. & Baker, B. (1999). Exploring social institutions through the films of Frederick Wiseman. *Journal of Management Education*, 23(2), 143-153.

Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Senge, P. M., Roberts, C., Ross, R. B., Smith, B. J. & Kliener, A. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organisation*, Doubleday Currency, New York.

Serva, M. A. & Fuller, M. A. (2004). Aligning what we do and what we measure in business schools: Incorporating active learning and effective media use in assessment of instruction. *Journal of Management Education,* 29(1), 19-38.

Short, J. C. & Ketchen, D. J. Jr (2005). Teaching timeless truths through classic literature: Aesop's Fables and strategic management. *Journal of Management Education*, 29, 816-832.

Sridar, B. S. & Sridar, S. (1993). Rating of films in management. *Journal of Education for Business*, 68(5), 267-273.

Stein, S. J. Isaacs, G. & Andrews, T. (2004). Incorporating authentic learning experiences within a university course. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(2), 239-258.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques,* Sage, Newbery Park, CA.

Thomas, H. (2007). An analysis of the environment and competitive dynamics of management education. *Dynamics of Management Education*, 26(1), 9-21.

Tidwell, C. H. Jr (2001). Fools rush in: Developing cross-cultural sensitivity using film-based group projects. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *National Communication Association*, November 1, Atlanta, GA.

Tyler, C. L. Anderson, M. H. & Tyler, J. M. (2009). Giving students new eyes: The benefits of having students to find media clips to illustrate management concepts. *Journal of Management Education*, 33(4), 444-461.