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EFFECTS OF THEATRICAL FILM-BASED INSTRUCTION INTEGRATED LEADERSHIP TRAINING ON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION AND CREATIVITY

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Effects of Theatrical Film-Based Instruction Integrated Leadership Training on International School Students' Learning Motivation and Creativity

Kangzhao WU¹, De DONG²

Abstract

Theatrical films are gradually applied to education field in past years, especially in courses of business administration, psychology, and linguistics. Being a visualized and situated teaching tool, films could effectively deliver abstract concept as well as induce students' emotional resonance and enhance deep learning. Students could promote the problem-solving skills and creativity through observing and imitating movie characters' behaviors. This study examined a cohort of 172 international school students in Shaanxi Province. The intervention comprised a 16-week program (48 sessions) that combined theatrical film-based pedagogy with leadership development. Analysis of the data demonstrated three significant relationships: the integrated film-leadership instruction positively influenced student learning motivation; this instructional approach enhanced student creativity; and increased learning motivation corresponded with higher creativity levels. These findings contribute to both the theoretical framework and practical applications of film-based methodologies in leadership education, offering implications for future pedagogical design.

Keywords: theatrical film-based instruction; leadership training; international school students; learning motivation; creativity.

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Introduction

Leadership training, in the modern higher education system, gradually becomes an important part in cultivating students' comprehensive competency. Along with globalization and frequent cross-cultural communication, college students should present professional skills and develop soft power of leadership, teamwork, problem solving, and creativity. According to Emotional Intelligence Theory proposed by Goleman (1995), leadership is not simply based on traditional intelligence test scores, but requires abilities of self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal management. For this reason, effectively integrating diverse teaching methods into leadership training becomes an important issue faced by instructional designers. Theatrical films are gradually applied to education field in past years, especially in courses of business administration, psychology, and linguistics, to induce students' learning interests and motivation (Chan, 2020). Films, being a visualized and situated teaching tool, could effectively deliver abstract concept as well as induce students' emotional resonance and enhance deep learning. According to Bandura's (1986) Social-Learning Theory, students could promote the problem-solving skills and creativity by observing and imitating behaviors of movie characters. For this reason, integrating theatrical films into leadership training might positively affect international school students' learning motivation and creativity.

Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory establishes a fundamental dichotomy in learning motivation, distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. The former referred to individual interests in and satisfaction with activities, while the latter was related to external rewards. Under globalized education environment, international school students, from different cultural background, show distinct learning motivation. Nevertheless, traditional classroom teaching model is rigid and lacks adequate situation and interest that it could hardly induce students' intrinsic learning motivation. How to promote students' learning interests through innovative teaching methods therefore requires educators' solutions. Innovation and creative ability are emphasized in the competitive workplace in the 21st century, and creativity becomes one of core abilities essential for a future leader (Amabile, 1996). Creativity does not simply affect students' academic performance, but is also a key factor in the future career development. However, the cultivation of creativity in current leadership training becomes a mere formality and lacks effective practice routes. Being a multi-sensory experience medium, films could inspire students' imagination and creative thinking to further promote the creativity. Accordingly, discussing the effect of theatrical film integrated leadership training on creativity presents the actual meaning.

While existing literature has established films as educational tools, there remains a significant research gap regarding theatrical film-based leadership training, particularly concerning its impact on international school students' learning motivation and creativity. Current research predominantly focuses on film-based instruction in language acquisition, cultural education, and psychological

development, with limited attention to leadership development. Notably, there is a scarcity of empirical studies examining the cultivation of core leadership competencies, such as communication, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

This study addresses these limitations by investigating the strategic application of theatrical films in leadership training. Previous research has primarily examined the relationship between film-based instruction and learning motivation in isolation, with minimal exploration of its impact on creativity. Furthermore, comprehensive analyses investigating the simultaneous effects on both learning motivation and creativity are notably absent from the literature. Consequently, this research examines the dual impact of theatrical film-based instruction on international school students' learning motivation and creativity within a leadership training context. The findings aim to expand both theoretical understanding and practical applications of film-based instruction in leadership development, thereby contributing to future pedagogical frameworks.

Literature review

Theatrical film-based instruction refers to a teaching strategy using complete theatrical films as the teaching tool as well as rich visual and situated materials provided by films to achieve specific educational goals. The basic theory could be traced to Dale's Cone of Experience, which stresses that real and specific learning experience could enhance deep understanding of knowledge (Dale, 1969). Theatrical films provide visual, auditory, and emotional stimuli to promote students' learning participation and memory retention rate (Mayer, 2009). Theatrical film-based instruction integrates complete theatrical films into teaching activities as major materials or auxiliary teaching tools to help students more intuitively comprehend course contents. Such a teaching method emphasizes the use of the narrative structure, visual effects, and emotional appeal films to induce students' learning interests as well as enhance the knowledge construction and emotional resonance (Goldstein & Bloom, 2011). Compared to audio-visual teaching materials of short films or single fragments, theatrical films provide more complete storyline for deeper discussion of character development, moral choice, and social issues to further enhance teaching depth and breadth (Kuzma & Haney, 2001).

The definition of learning motivation presents further development and is regarded, by scholars, as multi-dimensional psychological phenomena, involving in students' intrinsic driving force to participate in learning activities. The latest research reveals that learning motivation is understood as the setting of individual intrinsic interests, emotional investment, and learning goals of learning activities as well as the expected attitude towards learning outcome. Such factors affect students' selection of learning strategies, willingness to continuous learning, and academic achievement (Chirkov *et al.*, 2023; Pintrich, 2023). Scholars generally

distinguish intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation and indicate the interaction to commonly affect learning process. Intrinsic motivation comes from the interests and enjoyment of learning process, while extrinsic motivation is based on external returns (such as performance or approval) to drive actions (Chirkov *et al.*, 2023). Research also reveals that the collaboration of extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation could effectively enhance students' learning engagement and long-term motivation to learn, particularly when extrinsic motivation matches students' sense of self-determination and autonomy (Schunk *et al.*, 2023).

Recent definitions of creativity stress on the diverse and social characteristics. Creativity is generally defined as the ability to appear novel and valuable ideas or solutions. According to the viewpoint of cognitive psychology, creativity involves in the process to generate original and useful ideas (Runco, 2023). What is more, the definition of creativity is gradually regarded as the social and situated phenomenon. Research reveals that creativity is reinforced in multi-cultural environment; such environment facilitates the collision of different points of view to induce more divergent thinking and innovative solutions (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2023). Such findings emphasize that creativity is not simply individual cognitive ability, but is influenced by the environment and social interaction. In the field of organizational psychology, creativity is redefined as the ability to generate innovative and practical results in specific environment. Particularly, creation, in Teresa Amabile's 5-stage creativity model, is classified into different stages like identifying problems and developing ideas. Such a model stresses on the collaboration and process of creativity in collective or organizational environment (Plucker, 2023).

Theatrical films have demonstrated significant pedagogical value due to their inherent visual and contextual attributes. Mishan (2021) posits that films facilitate deeper content comprehension through narrative development and emotional engagement. The multi-sensory stimulation provided through visual and auditory channels enhances student attention and participation, making this methodology particularly effective for developing higher-order cognitive skills, including leadership and problem-solving competencies.

Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (2000) assert that intrinsic motivation significantly increases when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness during the learning process. Film-based instruction facilitates these elements by providing immersive scenarios that encourage active role engagement and autonomous learning. Empirical evidence from Stephens (2022) demonstrates that theatrical film-based instruction effectively heightens student engagement with course content, particularly when addressing cross-cultural and ethical dimensions.

Research by Sharma and Vohra (2020) specifically examined international school students, finding marked improvements in cultural comprehension and acceptance following exposure to culturally diverse theatrical films, subsequently enhancing

learning motivation. These films serve as rich repositories of cultural content and social discourse, fostering critical thinking and intercultural competence. Further substantiating these findings, Pillai and Ray (2023) observed significantly higher levels of classroom participation and learning satisfaction among students exposed to film-based instruction compared to traditional pedagogical methods, attributing this success to the films' presentation of conflict scenarios that stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving engagement.

Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, this study proposes:

H1: Theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training demonstrates significant positive effects on learning motivation.

Samaniego *et al.* (2024) considered in the research that a team with great belief could have the members constantly engage in creation and transfer inner deep ideas into creative actions, and proposed that social interaction and team support affected the level of group creativity. Albiladi *et al.* (2022) found out, in the research, the teaching effectiveness of FLASH animation teaching design on G5 pupils' creativity, especially the obvious growth on openness, originality, improvement, and imagination, and proposed that different genders and identities did not appear significant differences. Sánchez-Auñón & Férez-Mora (2021) discovered that integrating creative teaching activities into computer graphics courses could effectively enhance G6 pupils' creative and cognitive abilities on "flexibility", "originality", and "improvement" as well as abilities of "creative styling", "creative content performance", and "creative overall performance" in the computer works. It was also discovered that integrating creative teaching activities into painting production teaching could inspire creative ideas and performance as well as promote students' learning motivation and interests. However, it was also discovered that students did not appear remarkable differences on "color configuration and change" and "painting skills". Salmerón-Vílchez (2024) regarded the notable enhancement of "fluency", "openness", "flexibility", and "originality" of junior high school students' "creative ability" after integrating creative thinking teaching into computer animation production teaching. Choi (2023) mentioned that applying the teaching strategy of creative thinking to computer animation production significantly promoted openness, originality, precision, and learning attitude in junior high school students' creativity. Lee (2024) studied the effect of creative thinking teaching on graphic creativity that students' cognitive creativity was effectively enhanced, but not affective creativity. Liu (2019) studied creative film-based instruction to pupils' creativity that pupils presented more obvious openness, curiosity, and challenge as well as notable promotion of openness and precision. Drawing from the preceding theoretical framework and empirical evidence, this study advances the following hypothesis:

H2: Theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training demonstrates significant positive effects on creativity.

The relationship between learning motivation and creativity constitutes a pivotal topic of investigation within educational psychology. Amabile's (1996) *Componential Model of Creativity* underscores intrinsic motivation as a critical driver of creative output. According to this model, when learners engage in activities driven by genuine interest and enjoyment, their creative performance is substantially enhanced. Amabile argues that intrinsic motivation fosters open-ended exploration and experimentation with new ideas, positioning these behaviors as central to the development of creativity.

This theoretical perspective aligns with Deci and Ryan's (1985) *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT), which posits that creativity thrives in environments that promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness - conditions that inherently support intrinsic motivation. Hennessey's (2019) findings reinforce this view, illustrating that students in highly autonomous educational settings demonstrate greater willingness to take risks, thereby improving their problem-solving abilities and fostering creative thinking.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) *Flow Theory* further elucidates the connection between motivation and creativity, suggesting that individuals experiencing a state of "flow" exhibit heightened focus, satisfaction, and engagement, which collectively amplify their creative potential. This underscores the significance of structuring educational experiences that balance challenge and engagement to effectively stimulate learning motivation.

Empirical research substantiates these theoretical frameworks. For instance, Karwowski and Beghetto (2018) found that students with high levels of intrinsic motivation also exhibited elevated creative self-efficacy, which enhanced their capacity for creative problem-solving in challenging scenarios. Similarly, Tang and Werner (2022) demonstrated that students with robust intrinsic learning motivation achieved superior outcomes in creative domains such as writing and visual arts compared to less motivated peers.

Building on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the present study hypothesizes:

H3: Learning motivation has a significant positive effect on creativity.

Methodology

Research structure

Based on the preceding literature review, this study proposes a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that examines the differential effects between theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training and conventional leadership training approaches on two dependent variables: learning motivation and creativity.

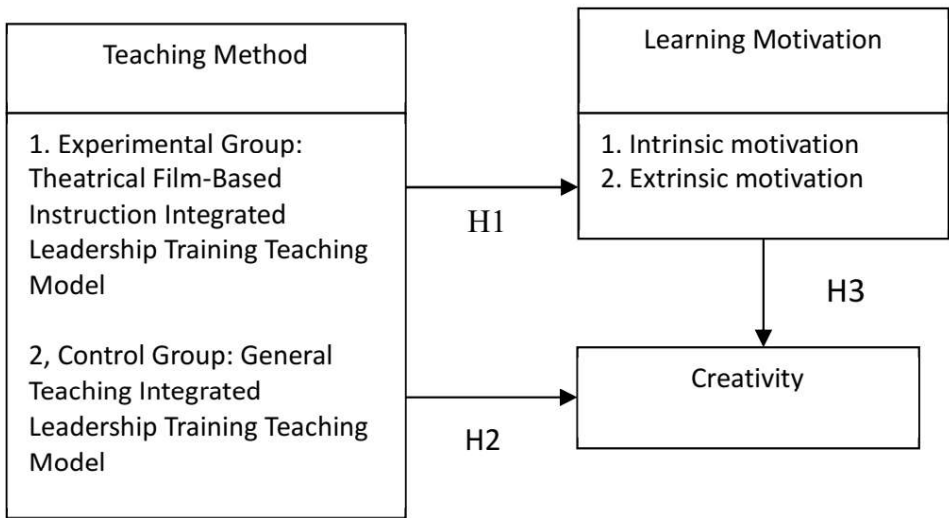


Figure 1: Conceptual structure

Research Variable Operationalization

Learning motivation: Following Tang and Werner's (2022) framework, this study conceptualizes learning motivation along two distinct dimensions:

- *Intrinsic Motivation:* (1) Preference for challenging coursework; (2) Pursuit of learning as a personal interest and hobby; (3) Recognition of learning as a means of broadening perspective; (4) Proactive engagement with new course content; (5) Learning oriented toward self-development and aspirational fulfillment.
- *Extrinsic Motivation.* Learning driven by (1) Seeking external validation; (2) Achievement of superior academic performance; (3) Meeting examination and assessment requirements; (4) Desire for peer recognition; (5) Competitive academic positioning; (6) Garnering appreciation from authority figures and potential romantic interests; (7) Avoidance of punitive consequences; (8) Prevention of academic failure-related embarrassment; (9) Securing future educational opportunities.
- *Creativity.* Adopting "Creative Thinking Test" compiled by Liu (2019), fluency, flexibility, originality, precision, and summation of cognition are contained in this study.

Research Design and Sample Characteristics

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design involving 172 students from international schools in Shaanxi Province. The intervention was conducted over a 16-week period, consisting of 48 instructional sessions. Participants were divided into two parallel groups: an experimental group that received integrated leadership training through theatrical film-based methods, and a control group that underwent traditional leadership instruction. The intervention was implemented over the course of one academic semester. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software, incorporating factor analysis, reliability analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the study’s hypotheses.

Table 1: Distribution of participants by gender and group

group	male	female	total
experimental group: theatrical film-based instruction	36	50	86
control group: general instruction	32	54	86

Instructional Design Implementation

The pedagogical intervention followed a 16-week structure:

- Week 1: Initial orientation, comprising course overview, group assignments, and assessment criteria establishment
- Weeks 2-15: Implementation of theatrical film-based integrated leadership training
- Week 16: Comprehensive review and assessment administration

Analytical Framework

The study utilized Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to investigate the differential effects of theatrical film-based integrated leadership training compared to conventional instructional methods on two dependent variables: learning motivation and creativity.

Results and Discussion

Reliability and validity analysis

Using factor analysis, the study identified two distinct factors within the construct of learning motivation, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of factor analysis for learning motivation

factor	eigenvalue	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	explained variance	cumulative explained variance
intrinsic motivation	3.145	0.91	50.263%	50.263%
extrinsic motivation	2.896	0.88	32.233%	82.496%

Through factor analysis, creativity in this study is extracted a factor, Table 3.

Table 3: Results of factor analysis for creativity

factor	eigenvalue	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	explained variance	cumulative explained variance
creativity	5.273	0.93	85.124%	85.124%

Variance analysis of theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training on learning motivation

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to assess the differential effects of instructional methods on learning motivation. The results indicated significant differences between the experimental and control groups (see Table 4). For intrinsic motivation, students who received theatrical film-based integrated leadership training scored significantly higher ($M = 4.25$) than those in the general instruction group ($M = 3.77$), $F = 18.922$, $p < 0.01$. Likewise, for extrinsic motivation, the experimental group exhibited significantly higher scores ($M = 4.46$) compared to the control group ($M = 3.81$), $F = 23.419$, $p < 0.01$. These findings provide support for Hypothesis 1.

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Learning Motivation Outcomes Between Film-Based and Traditional Leadership Instruction

variable		F	P	Scheffe test
theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training	intrinsic motivation	18.922	0.000**	theatrical film-based instruction(4.25)>general instruction(3.77)
	extrinsic motivation	23.419	0.000**	theatrical film-based instruction(4.46)>general instruction(3.81)

Note: * denotes for $p < 0.05$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$.

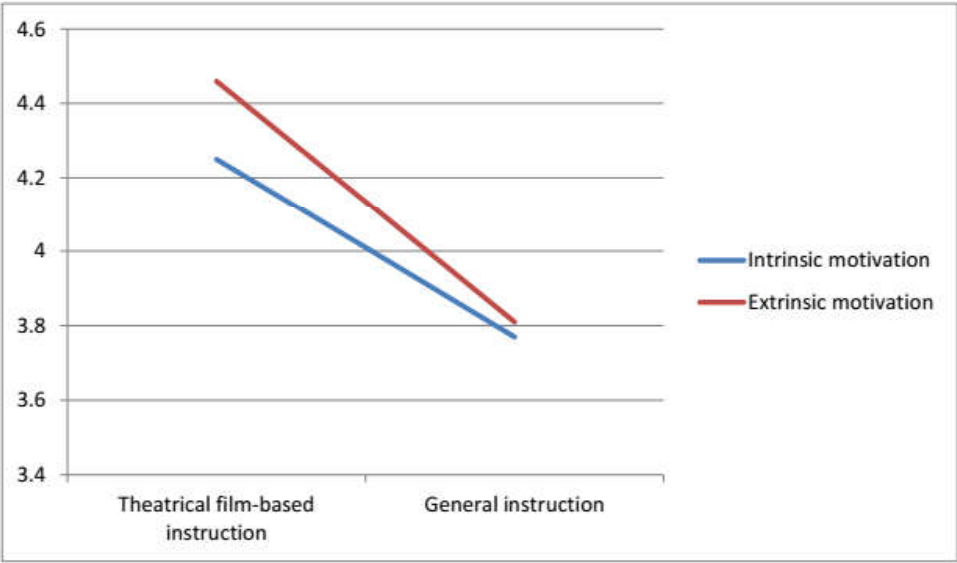


Figure 2: Analysis of Variance for Theatrical Film-Based Integrated Leadership Training on Learning Motivation

Variance analysis of theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training on creativity

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to investigate the differential effects of instructional methods on creativity. Results indicated that students exposed to theatrical film-based integrated leadership training demonstrated significantly higher creativity scores ($M = 4.62$) compared to those receiving general instruction ($M = 3.94$). These findings provide empirical support for Hypothesis 2.

Table 5: Variance analysis of theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training on creativity

variable		F	P	Scheffe test
theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training	creativity	33.186	0.000**	theatrical film-based instruction(4.62)>general instruction(3.94)

Note: * stands for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$.

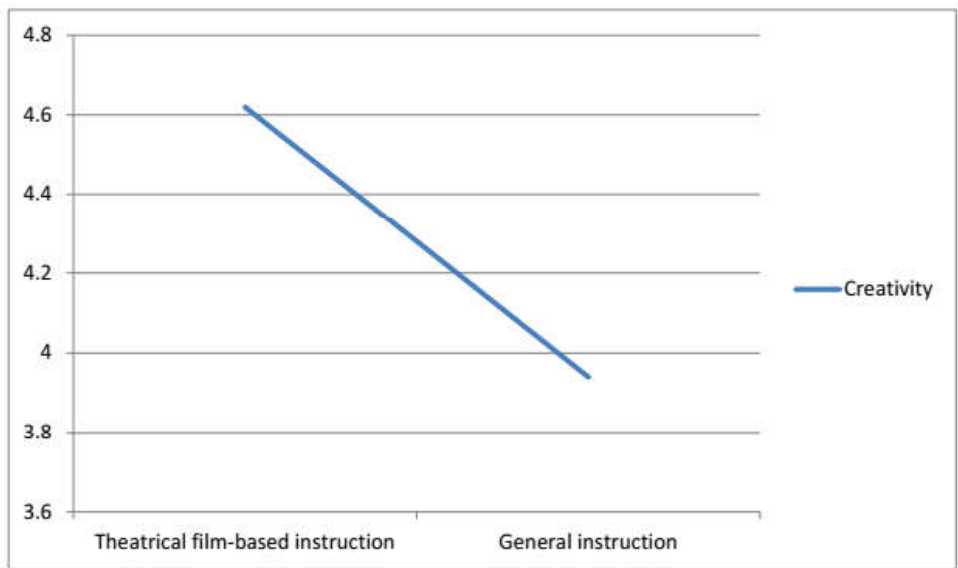


Figure 3: Variance analysis of theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training on creativity

Effects of Learning Motivation Dimensions on Creativity

Effects of Learning Motivation Dimensions on Creativity: To test Hypothesis 3, regression analysis was conducted to assess the impact of motivational factors on creativity. The results (Table 6) showed significant positive effects of both intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 2.513$, $**p < 0.01$) and extrinsic motivation ($\beta = 2.772$, $**p < 0.01$) on creativity. These findings offer compelling support for Hypothesis 3, indicating that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are significant predictors of creativity.

Table 6: Analysis of factors of learning motivation to creativity

dependent variable→	creativity	
independent variable↓		
learning motivation	β	P
intrinsic motivation	2.513**	0.000
extrinsic motivation	2.772**	0.000
F	41.582	
significance	0.000***	
R2	0.375	
adjusted R2	0.354	

Note: * denotes $p < 0.05$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$.

Data source: Authors gathered for the study

Conclusion

This study aims to discuss the effects of theatrical film-based instruction integrated leadership training on international school students' learning motivation and creativity as well as test three hypotheses. Through the empirical survey and data analysis of international school students, the research results support above three hypotheses. First, the introduction of theatrical film-based instruction significantly enhances students' learning motivation (H1 supported). Second, theatrical film-based instruction effectively reinforces students' creativity (H2 supported). Last, learning motivation achieves remarkable effects on creativity (H3 supported). The research findings reveal

- The enhancement of learning motivation: The introduction of theatrical film teaching method could effectively induce students' interests and engagement; particularly, international students, under cross-cultural environment, could more positively participate in course activities.
- The reinforcement of creativity: Students, through viewing characters and situations in films, could induce the imagination and problem-solving skills to further promote the performance on creativity.
- The promotion of creativity with learning motivation: Learning motivation does not merely enhance students' class participation, but is also transferred the promotion of creative thinking to prove learning motivation as an important prerequisite of creativity.

This study enriches the theory and practice application of leadership education as well as provides innovative teaching methods for education design. With the integration of film-based instruction, class activities become interactive and attractive to enhance learners' comprehensive development.

Discussion

According to the research results, theatrical films, being a visual and situated teaching tool, remarkably enhance students' learning motivation. It is consistent to SDT; that is, when higher autonomy and emotional investment are provided in learning environment, students' intrinsic motivation would be largely promoted. Storyline and characterization in films could have students generate emotional resonance to further promote the learning interests. Furthermore, students could reflect the leadership behavior and decision-making process in the viewing process; such situated learning could effectively reinforce students' learning motive.

Research findings support that theatrical films could notably enhance students' creativity; it matches Componential Model of Creativity. Complicated situations and conflict solving scenes in films could stimulate students' creative thinking and induce the problem solving skills. For example, theatrical films often present rich visual effects and multi-cultural background to expand students' vision and facilitate their comprehension of multi-culture to further induce more multiple creative performance. It reveals that introducing creative film situations into classes could effectively enhance students' divergent thinking and creativity.

The notable effect of learning motivation on creativity is also proven in this study. The enhancement of intrinsic motivation facilitates students to be more willing to explore and attempt new methods in the learning process. Students with interests in course contents and full of passion would tend to deep learning, rather than superficial knowledge absorption. Such deep learning would result in the generation and performance of creativity. In this case, a teacher, when designing leadership training, should pay attention to inducing students' intrinsic learning motivation so as to further enhance the development of creativity.

The application of theatrical films to leadership training reveals that it is not simply an auxiliary teaching tool, but is an effective strategy to promote students' learning motivation and creativity. The immersion characteristic of films allows students immersing in the situation to experience characters' decision-making process and leadership challenge; it presents vivid contrast with traditional teaching method simply relying on theory lecturing. Immersive teaching could effectively enhance students' emotional investment to further promote the learning motivation. Such a finding corresponds to multi-media learning theory that multi-sensory participation in learning activities could better reinforce students' comprehension and memory.

Suggestions

Drawing from the empirical results of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Educators could consider using theatrical films as auxiliary teaching tools, particularly in leadership training. Through case study and situation simulation in films, students could more specifically understand abstract leadership concept. Moreover, teachers could arrange students' team discussion and role play to further promote the cultivation of cooperative learning and team leadership.
- Since theatrical films cover multi-cultural background, teachers could utilize the characteristic to enhance international students' cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication skills. For instance, the selection of films reflecting distinct culture value could help students comprehend and respect multiple cultures to further facilitate the cultivation of global vision.
- Education policy makers could consider of supporting the practice of innovative teaching methods, such as providing teachers with relevant professional development courses, to promote the film-based instruction application ability. What is more, the promotion of creative teaching methods should be reinforced, encouraging schools to integrate more innovative elements in curriculum design, in order to cultivate future talents presenting creativity and leadership.
- Teachers are suggested to introduce case study and scenario simulation after film-based instruction to consolidate students' understanding of leadership concept in the film. For example, team activities could be designed for students playing film characters and simulating leaders' decision-making situation so as to enhance students' critical thinking and creative problem solving skills.
- To more effectively induce students' learning motivation, diverse film topics, according to course contents, should be selected, e.g. selecting films discussing moral dilemma for the discussion of ethical decision-making and choosing films stressing on teamwork for cultivating team cooperation ability. In this case, it does not simply attract students' interests, but could have the learning content be more specific.

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