

Cinema as a pedagogical practice in higher education: a case study applied to labour law*

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to discuss the use of cinema as a pedagogical resource in higher education in the legal field and, more specifically, in the teaching of labour law. It emphasises the importance of multimedia resources, focused on art and aesthetics, as an aggregating element for the formation of a humanist conscience that is essential in legal training. The purpose of this pedagogical practice is to use cinema as a means of reflecting on labour relations, starting from the reality portrayed and grasping the reality of each era. By watching and analyzing films, the objective is to study labour law and encourage social reflection (Russell, 2009). There are two general objectives: to provide a reflection on the evolution of Labour Law and to raise awareness of the reality of labour relations. The specific objectives are to use cinema as a teaching tool and to discuss film narrative and its different components.

It should be noted that this is a preliminary study that is presented as a working paper.

Keywords — Cinema, Education, Law, Movies, Multimedia.

I. INTRODUCTION

This is a working paper that serves as a preliminary exploration into the integration of cinema as a pedagogical tool in higher education. As an evolving area of research and practice, the document lays the foundation for future investigations and serves as a catalyst for student inquiry.

In the context of higher education, the traditional lecture-centric approach to teaching is gradually giving way to more innovative and engaging methods. One such approach gaining traction is the integration of cinema as a pedagogical tool. This paper explores the utilization of cinema in the teaching of labour law, aiming to elucidate its efficacy and potential impact on student learning outcomes.

II. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Legal education has historically adhered to conservative paradigms, prompting the exploration of alternative teaching approaches beyond traditional methods. A rising trend involves integrating cinema into pedagogical practices, forging connections between law and art.

In this concise examination, we endeavour to showcase how film, often regarded as the seventh art, can serve as a potent resource in educational settings. By employing cinema as a conduit for critical reflection within legal education, we depart from conventional models reliant solely on code comprehension and doctrinal analysis.

A lot can be learnt about law and social phenomena from films, because it “reflect powerful myths that

influence our reactions to issues we meet in real life, including legal issues” (Denvir, 1996).

The aim of this pedagogical practice is to use cinema as a means of reflecting on labour relations, starting from the reality portrayed and grasping the reality of each era.

By watching and analysing films, the aim is to study labour law and encourage social reflection.

III. THE PEDAGOGICAL POTENCIAL OF CINEMA

Cinema offers a unique medium through which complex legal concepts can be conveyed in a captivating and relatable manner. As noted by Eddy and Bracken (2008), “Critical examples of films from this teaching perspective would reinforce the idea of students questioning power dynamics and understanding how visual examples might be deconstructed to show inequities or to question the reality as shown”. By presenting legal scenarios in a visual narrative format, students are not only exposed to theoretical principles but also witness their practical application in real-world contexts.

Moreover, cinema has the capacity to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, making it accessible to a diverse student body. The use of cinema for educational purposes stems from the notion that mainstream media, like movies, create a scholarly setting where group learning experiences can be exchanged (Grubba, 2020).

The association of what is portrayed in cinematographic works with the student's daily life is also considered an incentive to use the audiovisual element as a teaching resource (Berk & Rocha, 2019). The use of cinema in legal education can have different purposes: to promote awareness-raising, understanding the social role of the profession, transmitting, and retaining information, enabling argumentation, thinking and reflecting (Lacerda, 2007).

IV. CASE STUDY: APPLYING CINEMA IN LABOUR LAW EDUCATION

4.1. Objectives

The use of this pedagogical practice has two general objectives:

- To provide a reflection on the evolution of Labour Law.
- To raise awareness of the reality of labour relations.

And there are two specific objectives:

- To use cinema as a teaching tool.
- To discuss film narrative and its different components.

4.2. Pedagogical contribution

It is essential to provide students with a critical view of the world of work, both for their training as citizens and for their legal training. Watching and analysing films is essential for training more complete professionals who can contribute to the consolidation of the Cape Verdean legal system. It is a unique opportunity to develop their critical awareness.

Before screening the film, instructors provide students with relevant background information on labour law principles and historical context. This contextualization primes students to analyze the legal issues depicted in the film critically.

Following the screening, facilitated discussions are conducted to explore the legal implications of the narrative. Students are encouraged to identify legal concepts, analyze their application within the film, and engage in reflective dialogue.

The cinema can promote the exercise of freedom of thought, opinion and awareness of the role that everyone has to play in their social environment (Pinho & Demartini, 2013).

4.3. Target Audience

The pedagogical practice was applied to an audience with the following characteristics:

- Law degree students;
- University of Santiago, Cape Verde;
- Distance learning system.

4.4. Themes

The themes related to labour law that we intend to address are as follows:

- Labour and the Industrial Revolution
- Labour and Modernity
- Labour and the labour movement
- Labour and subjectivity
- Labour and unemployment
- Labour and globalisation
- Domestic labour
- Oppression and gender
- Harassment and psychological violence

4.5. Movies

As law and justice are important themes in film (Denvir, 1996). In that context, the movies suggested to students are:

Germinal (Germinal), Claude Berri, 1993

I compagni (The organizer), Mario Monicelli, 1963

Daens (Daens), Stijn Coninx, 1992

Tempos Modernos (Modern Times), Charles Chaplin, 1935

La Classe Operaia va in Paradiso (The Working Class Goes to Heaven), Elio Petri, 1972

Eles não usam black tie (They Don't Wear Black Tie), Leon Hirszman, 1981

El método (The Method), Marcelo Piñeyro, 2005

Le Couperet (The Ax), Costa-Gavras, 2004

I, Daniel Blake, Ken Loach, 2017

Los Lunes al sol (Mondays in the sun), Fernando Aranoa, 2002

Domésticas - (Maids), Fernando Meirelles, Nando Olival, 2001

Dogville, Lars von Trier, 2003

The Devil Wears Prada, David Frankel, 2006

Direktøren for det hele (The Boss of It All), Lars von Trier, 2006

4.6. Dynamics and assessment

Each student must watch one of the films listed below and then submit a text containing between 500 and 600 words.

The text to be written by the students should discuss the historical moment portrayed by the film and reflect on the connection between the film and labour law issues.

In addition, students may submit an oral presentation of their reflection in class.

This work is optional and only serves to enhance the grade.

Assessment strategies include written reflections, analytical essays, and group presentations, wherein students demonstrate their comprehension of labour law principles as depicted in the film.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the incorporation of cinema as a pedagogical tool in labour law education holds

significant promise for enriching student learning experiences. By leveraging the emotive power of film, educators can foster deeper engagement, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary understanding among students. However, successful implementation requires thoughtful selection of films, careful facilitation of discussions, and alignment with course objectives. As higher education continues to evolve, cinema offers a dynamic means of enhancing pedagogical practices and preparing students for the complexities of the legal profession.

Furthermore, the subjective interpretation of cinematic narratives necessitates vigilant facilitation to ensure discussions remain focused on legal analysis rather than personal opinions or preconceptions.

Moving forward, an essential question to pose to students could be: "How can the integration of cinema enhance your understanding and engagement with complex legal concepts, particularly in the context of labour law?" This question invites students to reflect on the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating cinematic elements into their learning experiences, encouraging critical thinking and dialogue.

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