Enhancing Ethics Learning: Use of Storytelling Approach

Alvin Wong, Ivy Chan, Shun-man Law

Hong Kong Community College
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Presentation at FSTE 25th Anniversary Conference 2019

Introduction

* Scholars have been exploring **different pedagogies** to promote ethics education in recent years.

* **Storytelling** is perceived as an effective and powerful mean to convey message and engage audience while stories cover a wide range of anecdote, experience, or values. (e.g. Watson, 2003; Whyte and Classen, 2012).

* **Storytelling strategies** have been applied in various disciplines and context. (e.g. Whyte and Classen, 2012; Capuano, Maio, Gaeta, Mangione, Salerno & Fratesi, 2014)

Literature review

Ferrés and Masanet (2017) studied about the **communication efficiency** in education. They mentioned communication elements including **storytelling** in their study.

Some scholars discussed about different students' learning modes such as visual (V), auditory (A), read and write (R), and kinaesthetic (K) as covered in the VARK (or VAK) model (Fleming & Mills, 1992; Kharb, Samanta, Jindal & Singh, 2013)

Objectives

* This study provides some empirical evidences on the **effectiveness of the storytelling approach** from students' perspectives.

An ethical activity (storytelling approach)

* An ethical activity with of the use storytelling approach was conducted in February 2019.

* The story content covered four main areas including
  (i). daily-life situation;
  (ii). school situation;
  (iii). workplace situation; and
  (iv). philosophical (ancient) story of the Eastern tradition

An ethical activity (storytelling approach)

Topic Areas	Content Covered
(i). Daily life situation(s)	A visit to a souvenir shop - e.g. return the extra money changes?
(ii). School situation(s)	Responsibilities in team work/ group project - e.g. What are the possible consequences?
(iii). Workplace situation(s)	A story about job interview - e.g. employers' expectations on interviewees' characters; Ethics in team work/co-work setting

An ethical activity (storytelling approach)

Topic Area	Content Covered
(iv). Philosophical (ancient) story of the Eastern tradition	Story about the dialogue of Mencius with his disciple: e.g. Should one sacrifice the moral value for benefit. (枉尺直尋)? This session was held in the following steps: 1. Show the students the original text in the screen 2. Divide the texts in pieces and elaborate in modern, daily language and examples. 3. Connect the ancient concepts and ideas with current context. 4. Discuss with students about whether Mencius' view is still meaningful today and suitable for their daily life.

Data Collection

* This pilot study consists of two stages of data collection.

* (i). **Questionnaire** survey was conducted at the first stage, 18 students voluntarily participated in a questionnaire survey.

* (ii). Then, three participants were invited to attend **in-depth individual interviews** on voluntary basis to share their views and perceptions on the storytelling approach.

Stage 1: Questionnaire survey

Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions on the following questionnaire statements (using 5-point likert scale)

Q1. In general, the approach of storytelling by speaker(s), as compared with traditional teaching by teachers' instructions in classes, is a more interesting approach to learn ethics.

Q2. This ethics learning activity has enhanced my sense of ethics or moral related values when facing daily life situations.

Q3. This ethics learning activity has encouraged me to reflect on my own thoughts related to ethics and morals.

Q4.This ethics learning activity has encouraged me to reflect on my own behavior related to ethics and morals.

* The above question numbers differ from the actual questionnaire adopted. The full questionnaire also covers other questions including reasons of joining the activity, some respondents' profile such as gender, programme of study, stage of the study, etc)

Stage 1: Questionnaire survey

* 18 students voluntarily participated in a questionnaire survey.

* 17 complete sets; 1 incomplete set (lack of background profile)

* **Results based on the 17 completed sets of questionnaires.**

Stage 1: Questionnaire survey (results)

Questionnaire questions	Mean of rating (5 as "strongly Agree", and 1 as "Strongly Disagree)	Percentage of respondents indicating rating at 4 or above
Q1. (more interesting approach?)	4.24	94%
Q2. (enhanced my sense of ethics or moral related values?)	4.06	82%
Q3. (encouraged to reflect on my own thoughts?)	4.35	94%
Q4. (encouraged to reflect on my own behavior?)	4.24	88%

Stage 2: Individual interviews

Then, three participants were invited to attend in-depth individual interviews on voluntary basis to share their views and perceptions on the storytelling approach.

3 Interviewees' background:

- A: Science, male, year-2 student
- B: Business, male, year-2 student
- C: Business, female, year-1 student

Some findings from individual interviews:

* Using storytelling in ethical activity is an **interesting** approach to learn ethics

* The event was **interactive**, and helped participants to think about the situations from the perspectives of the story characters.

* This activity was **not commonly seen in the past schooling experience**, as mentioned by one of the interviewees.

* Some positive comments received from students on the philosophical (ancient) story content, especially when they can see the **relevance** and application of the content to their current situations.

* The philosophical (ancient) story content was meaningful and **inspirational**, as mentioned by one of the interviewees.

Conclusion

* This study serves as a pilot study on the use of storytelling approach to promote ethics education.

* More studies and data should be collected for further investigation on the effectiveness of this pedagogy.

References

* Capuano, N., Maio, C., Gaeta, A., Mangione, G., Salerno, S. & Fratesi, E., (2014). A storytelling learning model for legal education. International Conference e-Learning 2014, 29-36.

* Ferrés, J., & Masanet, M.-J. (2017). Communication efficiency in education: Increasing emotions and storytelling. Comunicar, 25(52), 51–60. https://doi.org/10.3916/C52-2017-05.

* Fleming, N.D. & Mills, C. (1992). Helping students understand how they learn. The Teaching Professor, Vol. 7 No. 4, Magma Publications, Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

* Kharb, P., Samanta, P. P., Jindal, M., & Singh, V. (2013). The learning styles and the preferred teaching-learning strategies of first year medical students. Journal of clinical and diagnostic research, 7(6), 1089–1092. doi:10.7860/JCDR/2013/5809.3090

* Watson, C. E. (2003). Using stories to teach business ethics – Developing character through examples of admirable actions, Teaching Business Ethics, 7:2, 93-105

* Whyte, G., Classen, S. (2012). Using storytelling to elicit tacit knowledge from SMEs, Journal of Knowledge Management, 16:6, 950-962 https://doi.org/10.1108/13673271211276218