

Movie Review of *To Sir, with Love* by Sidney Poitier

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Introduction

To Sir, with Love is one of the most influential British drama film released in 1967. Sidney Poitier was the star of the movie, who actor marvelously to depict the racial and social issues in inner-city schools. This movie was directed by James Clavell, who also wrote the screenplay of the movie, keeping in mind the autobiographical novel *To Sir, with Love* written by E. R Braithwaite. This movie gave new insights to the method of teaching and learning in educational institutions and the issues related to it. This discussion is based on detailed movie review of this epic movie.

Discussion

This movie begins with the story of a novice teacher, who is given a class of some very rowdy and ill-mannered students. Behind the rowdiness and misbehavior of these children come the basic themes of the movie. It discusses some of the profound fear, teenagers and children have to face in the 60s. It was rated as one of the most influential and entertaining classic film because it focused on the problems of teenagers, which developed into fear in the 60s. This remarkable presentation was given by Mark Thackeray. He portrays a hard working engineer, who has lost his job and ready to work as a teacher in London tough East end (Rotten Tomatoes, 2014).

His class, who was full of ill-mannered and rude students, came as one of the serious challenges to not only his life but to his personality as well. Some of the meanest of his students, such as, Pamela, Denham, and Barbera planned to defeat Thackeray by breaking his spirit. They

have done similar kind of ill treatment with their ex-teacher by killing and attacking his spirit. However, nature plays another kind of trick with Thackery. Instead of getting rid of his students or behaving rudely with them, Thackeray believed in them as a powerful workforce once they know about real life (Rotten Tomatoes, 2014).

Later, the turning point of the movie is when Thackeray is being offered an engineer job and he has to take one of the most crucial decisions of his life, as to whether give up teaching and make his desired career or to make the fat of his students (Rotten Tomatoes, 2014). This movie is an example of one of the most popular films about teaching and the education of children. Different concepts regarding schools and other educational system shed light on the social systems concerning education in the society. This film is also an example that highlights the struggle for a teacher to change the typically negative cultures and environments of schools (Shouse, 2005).

One of the central themes of this movie is how a common man faces the crisis of taking a decision in the most crucial times. Thackeray is represented as this common man, who has to tackle the decision of choosing between his own career and the career of so many students he is currently teaching. In this way, his role is of an organizational leader. In all the educational theories that are studied today, role and responsibilities of an organizational leader is stressed upon. He is responsible for thinking about the career and future of the students. Thackery did all these things in the movie (Shouse, 2005).

There are rich and detailed longitudinal sections on the problems and experiences related to school leadership. In addition, how this school leadership affects the entire social system of the people living in the society is also portrayed. As shown in the movie, various formal and informal school cultures and settings enable students to have every kind of interaction. If this

environment is based on positive attributes then students will have positive interaction. On the other hand, negative school culture will give rise to negative and bad cultural setting in schools and various other educational institutions. Courses about educational administration and educational sociology have developed through these themes (Shouse, 2005).

To Sir, with Love broadens the theoretical understanding of the life of schools and even the life outside schools. Students, teachers, and other members of education and educational institutions are not only affected by what happens in the premises of schools but they are also affected by what society thinks about them and does with them. Many educational theorists, such as, James Coleman, Willard Waller and Dan Lortie have given their influences in the theme making of the movie. All these theories and themes have sparked the challenges and problems faced by schools and teachers in the 60s. This movie is solely based on the novel by E. E Braithwaite (IMDb, 2014).

In the novel, writer explored different scenarios of how African born teacher faces difficulty in dealing with the children due to the racial segregations in the society and the thinking of people. When the novel was written for the very first time, it was believed to be based on the typical story of an African American being racially judged and misjudged due to the ethnic discoveries. However, critical analysis of the story reveals that how this movie and novel is a nutshell. There are different and complex related stories depicted in the story, which revolve around one single story of Thackery (Shouse, 2005).

Thackeray earned the respect and love from his class through great struggle. Although he has gained education regarding his engineering subjects, he ends up being a teacher. He wanted to have an engineering job but he could not find one so he decided to become a teacher. However, he did not realize that teaching would make him confront the social and educational

crisis of the society in the 60s. One of the most influential and spiritual themes of the movie is that Thackeray took his students' attitude as a challenge. He did not quit teaching and ran away from his role as a teacher just because his students seemed too furious and agitating (Shouse, 2005).

His students, on the other hand, used various tactics to break him emotionally and spiritually. They tried to ridicule him by giving him disrespectful comments at every point. As a response, Thackeray always handled them as students, who can be improved and tamed through love, care, strictness, and authority. Although Thackeray was still a human being, he managed to keep his mental health stable. He knew that he is being mentally tortured by students because they have shown similar kind of attitude to their former teacher too. He is being advised by his female colleague that his students are goo but they need to be solved or else they will try to break him (Shouse, 2005).

Moreover, Thackeray displayed his extraordinary skills in teaching by making his students experiment and explore their textbooks and educational curriculum. Keeping himself on the place of his students, he realized that students are bored of the usual textbooks they study. Instead, they would like to study book, which makes them talk about random topic they choose. He then decides to abandon their textbooks. He knew that his students would like to talk about topic, such as, love, popular cultures, marriage, sex, and life. He knew that after studying these topics, they would question him about different things; which shall be challenge for him to answer (Shouse, 2005).

Later, he realizes that he will have a very good kind of interaction and communication with his class students if they shall get a chance to have books on these topics and they will discuss it (Joyce, 1985). By doing this, filmmakers gave one of the best advices to educational

strategy makers that curriculum and courses should be designed in such a way that they should neglect students' taste and age. Through effective interaction, they can build affective classroom culture and this affective classroom culture can make them become better students. Although, Thackeray was an engineer, he somehow managed to portray an example of a good teacher (Shouse, 2005).

Conclusion

In conclusion, *To Sir, with Love* is one of the most entertaining and informative movie of 1967 that proved the necessity of having school culture and educational improvements in the field of education. Sidney Poitier is indeed one of the most spectacular stars in the movie, who made the film worth watching.

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