Animation of the Life of a Man — From Birth to Marriage

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Abstract: As Taiwanese students seldom have a clear idea about their plans for schooling, work, and marriage, this study, based on the importance of career planning, combined the MomentCam app and PowToon to produce a teaching animation called The Life of Man, which presents the process of birth, playing, schooling, work, and marriage. The characters in the animation provoke students to reflect and understand themselves, and then plan a life according to their own values. By watching the animation made by this study, students could learn the significance of career planning and ponder real life and daily life experiences by knowing themselves, finding out new things, making decisions, and taking action.

Key words: App, animation, career planning, multimedia.

1. Introduction

The life of a person can be long or short, depending on how it is planned. Generally, people only think about such planning when they are influenced by certain people, events, or daily life experiences. In terms of the factors influencing career planning, the sociologist Mead (1934) argued that it is not necessary for one to make a difference directly based on observations by others. People can think about what action they will take by imaging themselves as being others. By putting oneself in others' shoes, one may realize what kind of person they want to become [1]. The diffused audience effect of the rise of the Internet, which has become today's most important reading platform [2]. No one can escape the direct or indirect impact of media in contemporary times [3].

With the popularization of the Internet and mobile devices, governments of various countries have begun to pay attention to the application of multimedia teaching materials and mobile learning platforms since 2000 [4], [5]. Comics and animation can be used as multimedia teaching materials. Comics represent a painting technique that shows the nature and characteristics of things via simple means that are not restricted by time and space [6]. Animation simulates a story background, inserts intriguing plots, and presents vivid characters. It can draw on extensive materials and create cliff-hanging stories [7]. However, after viewing animations and cartoons, readers may narrate the stories of themselves or others, build self-identity, arouse emotion, and see/find their roles in scenarios via their imagination. Students learn the significance of career planning and ponder real life and daily life experiences by knowing themselves, finding out new things, making decisions, and taking action.

2. Motivation

Animations and cartoons can shape real-life situations or tell fictitious stories. Taking cosplayers for

example, through costume and makeup, they can shape themselves into an ideal model and think about their own existence. In the study of drama appreciation and role behavior, they imitate the behaviors of characters to construct their sense of self. Due to the characteristics of characters and the pursuit of accomplishment, they may enhance their planning abilities and put their planning into practice. This study attempted to adopt the theme of The Life of a Man to produce an animation that could guide students to understand their lives and recognize the roles that they need to play in their lifetime.

Multimedia teaching materials make the presentation of course contents more convenient and diversified, and they bring about more enjoyment to students during learning. Students can refer to animations to reflect on each of their stages, receive meaningful education results, and learn effectively [8]. Through viewing animated teaching materials that are closely related to our lives, we may recall the past, think about the present, and plan for the future, including graduation, work, marriage, retirement, and even death. This study adopted the theme of The Life of a Man to produce an animation, and hoped to give full play to the role of teaching and learning through the animation and inspire students to have more far-reaching and diversified mindsets. Through this animation, it was hoped that the viewers could learn about themselves, find out what they are interested in, make the best decisions, take action to realize their expectations, and reflect on their real-life experiences.

3. Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to employ animation and cartoon software to produce the animation called The Life of a Man so that students could reflect on their own lives, plan for the future, and arrange their goals for each stage in advance. Moreover, students could ponder about each stage of their lives via the four steps of knowing oneself, finding out about oneself, making decisions, and taking action, and then starting to plan their golden lives from that point on.

4. Literature Review

With the rapid progress of society and science & technology, although people have a convenient and fast way of life, they feel spiritual emptiness. Human relations have become less close than before. Individuals may even lose themselves in mainstream values and neglect the meaning and value of life [9]. This implies the importance of a correct outlook on life. In fact, the life of a person is no more than birth, graduation, work, marriage, aging, and death.

It seems that, in a flash, one enters a next stage of life. Hence, it is necessary to emphasize the process of life. It is often said that life is unpredictable. No one knows how long he or she can survive. Therefore, individuals must make good use of their time and live a wonderful life [10]. Learning is self-motivated. Through animations and cartoons, individuals can reflect on each stage of their lives and urge themselves to cherish every moment.

The pursuit of knowledge by humans is not only limited to nature, but is also important to arrange one's life process [11]. Every day, individuals make their own agendas. They usher in each stage day in and day out. When they are old, most people can only recall their past. If they do not plan their lives well, perhaps they may be reduced to listening to the happy and sad life experiences of families and friends rather than enjoying their own lives. Reference [12] found that the proportion of undergraduates who plan their studies and lives is not high, and that the implementation results of such plans are dissatisfying. Most students often reflect on their strengths and weaknesses to realize the importance of planning.

Students seldom engage in career planning. Reference [13] indicated that undergraduates have weak awareness of career planning, and that teachers can guide them to plan their life goals [14]. According to reference [15], most students do not know the meaning of career planning and lack clear plans or targets.

Schools are expected to practically enhance the education and guidance on career planning for undergraduates so that they can establish a correct outlook on life and values, develop healthily, and assume more social responsibilities. Reference [5] suggested identifying one's interests and planning for the future as early as possible. If individuals can combine their interests with their work, it will be the happiest thing in the world. Certainly, individuals should not be restrained to familiar fields; rather, they should be brave to accept challenges, because challenges are success in disguise. Based on youth and social development, schools, industrial and commercial circles, society, and parents have recognized and supported the enhancement of career planning. In order to promote career planning, it is important to facilitate students to plan their careers as early as possible during schooling so as to prepare themselves for the future [16]. This study hoped to provide various forms of support to the concept of career planning through The Life of a Man and arouse students' interest in career planning. During the setup of goals and practice, students could deepen their understanding of themselves, find their true selves [17], improve themselves, and establish the attitude and ability adaptive to changes.

Career planning is the process by which individuals follow their career goals and seeks ways to achieve them. The key lies in the combination of personal goals with actual opportunities [18]. Reference [19] deemed that career development stands for the process by which people assume various roles during their lifetime, develop the identity to self and career, and enhance the maturity of career development, which lead to values on work, career selection, lifestyle, role integration, identity to self and career, and educational background. Career planning refers to the way and method with which individuals set up their goals and strive to achieve them [20]. Individuals plan their future careers as much as possible, consider wisdom, aptitude, value, obstacles, and driving forces, make appropriate arrangements, and hope to realize the plan [21]. The animation of The Life of a Man developed by this study aimed to guide students to think about how to become a person with the ability of career planning, make comprehensive assessments of their intelligence, interests, aptitude, potential, personality traits, and intention of work based on planned items and key points within a period of time, as well as effectively assess and flexibly adapt to external social and environmental changes and increase the probability to realize their goals.

If new generations of young people are not sure about their goals in life, and if schools or families do not teach them the concept of career planning, how can we expect them to know the importance of this topic? They can only learn it by trial and error in life. Schools play a significant role in the career planning of students. If schools value the topic of career planning, they will try their best to penetrate the concept in education through various means like course activity design and the introduction of relevant career planning analysis systems (e.g. the Ucan Junior College Employment Competence Diagnosis Platform). In this way, students can learn their aptitude, identify and set up their future career goals soon, strengthen the required abilities, accumulate employment strengths, and realize goals more smoothly. By learning the employment intentions of students, schools can properly plan relevant courses so that what students learn can be consistent with the workplace [22].

In the current era of information, most information in life is received via vision. TV, networks, and animation have become increasingly popular and have changed the lives of many individuals. People are fond of animation mainly because of the cultural connotations embedded in animation [23]. For students, compared with literature, comics are easier to read and do not pose any learning pressure. Comics are a media for reading, but the most obvious difference with books lies in that their contents are presented by images.

Reading comics allows one to obtain new and positive spiritual experiences and beliefs [24]. Reference [25] pointed out that animation and comics generated by the integration of information technology and art makes teaching more effective and students more motivated to learn. Reference [26] indicated that

animation and comics about campus life are full of everyday conversations and are suitable to be used as textbooks. The adoption of animation and comics as teaching materials has been recognized by students, who generally state that such learning is pleasant and causes more interest in learning. As a result, this study believed that animation and comics are attractive. Animation and comics can better depict each stage of life in a clear, vivid, and true manner.

5. Production of The Life of a Man

In terms of the animated teaching material The Life of a Man, first, the script of birth, playing, schooling, work, and marriage was designed.

As technology advances, multimedia has flooded our lives, and many free mobile applications (apps) have emerged. Hence, this study combined the MomentCam app and PowToon to draw images for the animation. In terms of figures, it inserted photos into a Microsoft Word document, removed the background, used MomentCam to combine faces and comics, and selected new backgrounds. There were various new backgrounds available, such as wedding photos, leisure life, and babies. Figure 1 shows the photo of this author. Taking the stage of infancy for instance, the Makeup function was selected to adjust the face shape, hair style, and skin tone. The completed comic was then input to PowToon. Fig. 1 does not directly use the figures inside PowToon, because this study intended to present figures closer to real life.
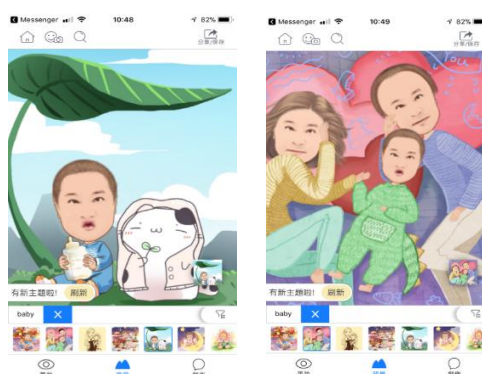

Fig 1. Photo of the author in the category of baby.

Production of multimedia animation:

Step 1: Insert a picture to MS Word. Click "pattern format" and "remove background" (Figure 2).

Step 2: Click "marked area has been removed", then click "keep changes" after marking (Figure 3).

Step 3: Return to the original image, move the cursor to the image with the background removed, and right click "save as picture". The background of the picture is then removed (Figure 4).

Step 4: Open PowToon, and click the type of animation ("professional" was selected in this case) (Figure 5).

Step 5: Add two to three scenes (Figure 6).

Step 6: Continue to select the desired scenes.

Step 7: After selection, click "continue" on the top right corner.

Step 8: Click "image" on the bottom right corner, and then click "upload image" to upload all the pictures that will be used in the scenes.

Step 9: Chose one picture that will be used by the scene and press "insert image" to the scene.

Step 10: Use PowToon to make a lively animation.

While making the multimedia animated teaching material, the author thought about ways to make the characters become more vivid. One of the methods was to combine the images into a GIF file. However, a

problem occurred during the upload of the GIF file to PowToon. The GIF file needed to be changed to a SWF file before uploading; however, after conversion, the entire animation stalled and failed to meet the original expectation of the team. Therefore, this method was not feasible. If the team inserted pictures one by one to PowToon, it could also create the effect of moving figures. This method was time-consuming; however, in order to produce an excellent animation, such complicated steps were worthwhile.

Figures 7 to 15 are screenshots of the design of script for The Life of a Man.
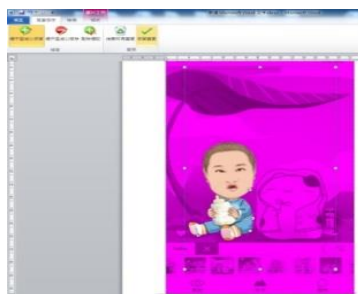

Fig. 2. Remove the background.
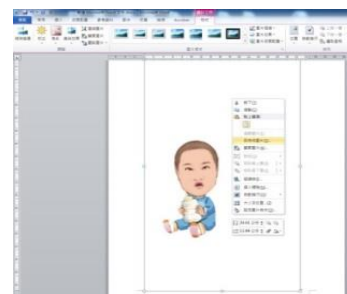

Fig. 3. Keep change.

Fig. 4. Finish background removal.

Fig. 5. Click "image" on the bottom right corner and then click "upload image" to upload all the scene pictures that will be used in the scenes.
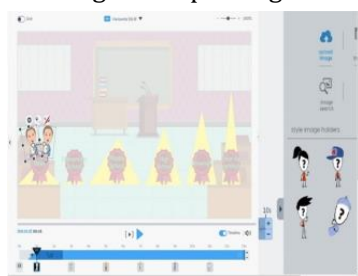

Fig. 6. Chose one picture that will be used by this scene and press "insert image" into the.

Fig. 7. Start of the animation of the life of a man.

Fig. 8. Birth of Weng, the protagonist.

Fig. 9. Born in a small village.

Fig. 10. Mom and dad wanted to give Weng good education.

Fig. 11. Weng studied hard to make his parents proud.

Fig. 12. He worked hard and passed the college entrance exam.

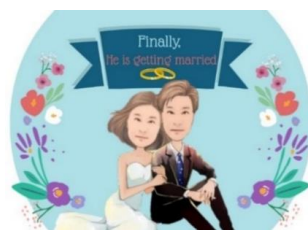Fig. 13. After graduation, he became a teacher.

Fig. 14. He thanked his parents for raising him and cultivating him.

Fig. 15. He found his sweetheart, got married, and formed a family.

6. Results

This study combined a camera, apps, and MomentCam to produce the animated teaching material called The Life of a Man. The apps could be used with a mobile or a computer. The pictures were taken by a camera and then imported to a computer to make the comic. All the steps were conducted using emerging technologies and multimedia tools.

The use of first person narration had to be avoided, because descriptions of the concept from the first person would make people think that the animation was not objective. Thus, the team decided to adopt the third person to tell the story. Students could reflect on their own lives while watching. It was the author's belief that The Life of a Man would drive students to grow and think.

While watching the animation, students thought about their past, present, and unknown futures. Students are usually puzzled about what job to have, how much money to earn and save, if they will get married, and if they will have a problem with mortgages after graduation. Through The Life of a Man, students could reflect on their own lives by referring to the character in the animation. Though the story may not match the life of every student, it would still have resonance. The students could reflect on themselves, ask each other how they will develop their life and career goals, what they will buy, and if they will have a mortgage . The results of this study could motivate students to think about the importance of career planning via the steps of knowing yourself, finding out about yourself, making decisions, and taking action.

7. Conclusion

Most individuals have already written about their futures, ambitions, and dreams in primary school. However, time flies. When people grow up, they may suddenly realize that their future, ambitions, and dreams are far away. Perhaps due to changes in ambition or compromise with reality, most people can only recall their lives or sit under an old banyan tree, drink a cup of tea, and listen to the stories of families and friends.

Therefore, based on the importance of active learning, this study hoped to present the importance of career planning through animated teaching materials, help students understand the importance of active learning, spark their enthusiasm for active learning, and allow them to get immersed in the joy of learning. The use of the animated teaching material The Life of a Man could guide and strengthen students' abilities

in active learning, so that they can yield more results with less effort, no matter in academic performance or in learning other new things. This animation could provoke the audience to have new thinking on their lives and contribute to career planning.

8. Suggestions

Suggestions for follow-up researches are as follows:

1) The animation of The Life of a Man can integrate the concepts of income, savings, loans, annuities, and pensions with the concepts mentioned above, or, it could be designed separately into different series of teaching materials, such as student loans, saving after work, wealth management in marriage, and planning after retirement. Students can think about the things that they may run into at each stage of life so that they can start to plan their golden lives. Teaching and learning contents can also be added.

2) A dedicated website platform can be created, or the animation can be combined with multimedia systems so that students can easily learn the steps to produce animation, access animation cases, and learn and discuss via the platform.

3) The animated teaching material can be integrated into other teaching materials. For instance, a series of animations on wealth management can be produced for the students' learning.

Acknowledgement

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