Video Education

- Video production and media education

Handout

An introduction to video education

A warm welcome to video education. With this handout we would like to summarise our ideas about video education and give you concrete support for getting started regarding possible themes and video technology. The handout is based on our extensive experience with school video projects - projects where the students themselves create their own media messages using video production and then reflect on the messages they have produced. Video projects are an interesting extension of daily teaching practice, they are exciting and motivating for the young people involved and they can be very helpful in international school projects.

A video project is about producing a video together. If this sounds daunting, then it doesn't need to: it can begin with short and simple exercises, you don't need to produce a long feature video. You can get started by simply documenting a part of your lesson or by just catching an interesting moment with the camera, and these can be left unedited. If your lesson time is limited then you can link the project with independent video work outside of lessons. The most important thing about the project is the *process* and the *reflection* – to ask at each stage: what has been done and why. Once you feel confident with these exercises you can go on to try longer and more demanding projects.

And you don't need to be a professional video technician with an exhaustive collection of modern video technology for recording and editing. You can simply use the technology you already have available and that may be more than you realise. You can get started with a stills camera (nearly all have a video function) or even a smart phone. Many computers have editing software which is already pre-installed or can be downloaded for free. This is enough for most of the educational video work. And if you need help with the technology then secondary students are often able to help. It is more important that you understand the *concepts* you want to introduce than that you fully understand all technological aspects.

We hope, that you find this handout useful. Please write to us if you have questions. But please also tell us your good ideas and share your videos with us!

You can download this handout from www.viducate.net or www.mediaeducation.net

1. The pedagogy of video projects

Video education is not about learning how to use a video camera and video editing equipment. We want to help students to engage critically with the modern media world and producing their own videos, however simple, is the means to this end. This is the core idea behind all the video education work we promote. It is about understanding media messages, about being active by asking questions and about developing your own messages.

It is important for successful video projects that they are well planned. This involves planning enough time for the students to write an outline of the content of the video and enough time for reflection on what has been produced. Reflection is important at all stages of the process as well as an evaluation which compares the initial intentions with the final outcome.

Equally important is collaboration – producing moving images is a team process. Planning scripts, recording the images and editing the footage provide many opportunities for the students to actively discuss their ideas and find a consensus. Exploring audio-visual material together opens up a valuable discussion about different meaning and emotions. At the end of the project each group presents their production and there is space to discuss the experiences from the project.

Videos are a great medium for exchanging impressions of your class, your school or some of the activities you do together. The exchange of videos with other groups of learners especially with learners from other cultural backgrounds help students become aware of their own background. The production and presentation of your own work also creates a greater openness towards video presentations from the exchange partners. Video projects can in this sense be helpful tools for intercultural learning.

If you would like to find out more about video pedagogy check out the background section of www.viducate.net. And explore www.mediaeducation.net for more overall ideas about media education. You can also download the pdf booklet "Media Education across the Curriculum" in the download section.

2. Possible themes for your video project

There are endless themes for video projects, basically everything you do can be documented and explored with video. Within our viducate project we have started to map video work within the transversal themes of *creativity*, *active citizenship* and *intercultural communication*. You can find an introduction to each theme and examples in the database of best practice examples (http://viducate.net/video-presentations/viducate-video-gallery.html).

But the themes can just as easily be linked to your **school subjects**. We have done projects related to the subjects of sport, history, biology and foreign languages but many other subjects are of course also possible. If you need an idea why not try:

- **Sport**: produce a short video about sports stars (and discuss how sport is represented in the media, http://www.mediaeducation.net/EN/themesSport.htm)
- **History**: focus on past events and ask the children to produce a short documentary (linking with the idea of the mediation of history, http://www.mediaeducation.net/EN/themesHistory.htm)
- **Biology**: create short clips where the students present themselves as advertising models (and discuss how bodies are represented in advertising, http://www.mediaeducation.net/EN/themesBiology.htm)
- **Foreign languages**: present short clips where you show a few words or a short role play (www.divisproject.eu)

Another idea could be based on **television news**. You can set up a simple news studio somewhere in your school and different groups of children can produce short news articles about news from the school or the neighbourhood. This can lead to interesting discussions about the selection of news articles on national television channels (more here: www.23muskeltiere.de/europe.htm)

Or you can try out stop-motion, a simple animation technique which makes moving objects out of still images (http://viducate.net/themes/video-and-creativity.html)

3. What video cameras do I need?

Lots of different technologies can be used to record videos. These obviously includes video cameras themselves in different formats and quality but also still cameras with video functions, web cameras and smart phones.

Generic **video cameras** normally offer good handling and have a bigger lens, a good zoom control and decent sound. Old models might still operate with tapes (mini-DV) or mini-DVDs and will need a "firewire" cable and connector at your computer. They can still be used for projects. The image quality of these cameras is still OK, but the handling is more clumsy than newer memory based cameras.

Memory based video cameras have become the standard now. These can be linked to the computer through a USB cable or the memory card. They produce video files which can be watched straight away on the computer. This makes it a lot easier for school projects since you don't need to copy the video material as you used to have to with tape based cameras. Standard definition is fine for video education projects, they are a bit easier and faster to edit since they require less computing power but it is clear that high-definition will become the future standard.

Most **stills cameras** have a video function and this is normally good enough for educational projects. Check beforehand if the sound quality is sufficient and if you can edit the material with your computer. Some of the cameras use less common video formats. Recent **SLR and system cameras** offer constantly improving video quality, they have also become very fashionable in the semi-professional sector. The interchangeable lens allows for more creativity - this is especially useful for visual projects in higher secondary schools.

Many **smart phones** already have built in high-definition video recording. They have often limited lenses and the sound quality is normally not as good. However they are very practical and many students have them already. This helps projects where you would like several groups to work at the same time. There is already basic video editing software available for most smart phones. Check out the applications available.

Web cameras are normally built-in with notebooks, but you can also get them for little money for your desktop computers. They can be used to record clips with action taking place in front of the computer and you can upload them at the same time, YouTube offers this service for example.

If you want to record good sound then you should either look into a separate sound recorder which records the sound on a memory card or for a better camera which has a socket for an external microphone and ideally for headphones so that the sound can be checked at the same time.

4. What is needed for editing?

Video editing is an exciting process for shaping your videos and deciding on the messages and direction of your film. It can be a fruitful group process. Make sure that the editing is done in groups of two or three so that the teams are forced to discuss what they want to do. This is an important phase in the production process for understanding how films are made.

The two main computer platforms (Windows / mac) both offer basic video editing software - **Movie Maker** and **iMovie**. Both of them are more than adequate for educational video projects. Movie Maker might need to be downloaded if you have a newer version of Windows, but the download is free.

Moviemaker and iMovie offer you basic video editing: you can select the clips, add effects, transitions, sound effects and titles. They both offer enough possibilities to export the edited film again to share the film with your class, your school or your exchange project. The newer versions of both work well with most video camera formats, including High-Definition. There are lots of video tutorials on YouTube available to get you started. Here are some for Movie Maker and iMovie:

- Introduction to Movie Maker:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZXK68NS7gU
- Intro to Movie Maker from Windows 7:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9uVx2t8ihI
- Getting started with iMovie:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCq2ncg7Mqg
- Advanced editing with iMovie 9:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSbgYP-G_vY

Once you feel confident with the basic video editing software, you can explore the mid-range market of video editing software. This includes packages such as Magix Video deluxe or Adobe Premiere Elements. Both offer more possibilities to overlay images within more video tracks and more possibilities for sound refinements. This also might be a good option for upper secondary where students work on their videos more independently.

5. How can I share my finished video?

Streaming portals such as **YouTube** or **Vimeo** have become popular platforms for publishing video clips and are a useful way to make your project known or visible to your wider partnership. There are also educational video platforms such as **teachertube.com**. All of these portals offer a free upload of your video clips. You need to create an account first, but this is normally a straight forward procedure.

You need to export your video file from your editing software first. There are normally presets offered which you can simply use. Common codecs include .mov (quicktime), wmv (Windows Media) and also mpeg 4 variations such as the H.264 codec. If you have a good broadband internet connection you don't need to be too concerned about the file size. Most platforms now have very high file-size restrictions so you can opt for better image and sound quality.

The **uploading** can take a few minutes depending on the files size and internet connection. Think beforehand about the description and the 'tags' you need to put in. If you want other teachers to be able to find your video then you need to think carefully about what search criteria your audience might use. The streaming portals can also be used for uploading short (unedited) clips from mobile phones, organisers, web or stills camera. Just copy the clip onto your hard disk and upload it directly. Most formats work straight away without any conversion procedure.

Once your video clip is uploaded you can share it within your social networks (buttons are provided and you just need to click on them). Or you can copy and paste the embed code to include the video on your school website or blog (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLJZSugn4f4).

Two final things which you need to double check before uploading: Make sure that the productions of your students don't contain any copyright protected material such as commercial music, photos or extracts from films. This might get automatically checked and deleted by the video portals. And also make sure that the parents of the pupils / students have agreed in writing that the video material can be published online. Don't include any full names or addresses (including email addresses) in your videos.

6. Get support - join our video courses

We offer regular **video education courses** for European teachers in Berlin twice every year. If you have found this handout interesting then you might be interested in joining the team for one week in Berlin and exploring media education and media production together. The courses are funded by the European Commission and most of the costs are paid via European funding for the participants. You have to apply through your National LLP Agency for a place. There are national deadlines for application which need to be followed. More online: www.course.mediaeducation.net

If you are totally new to video editing or video production in general you could consider getting **external support** from a local community centre or also consider experienced secondary school students who might have edited videos before.

7. Get connected - join our network

Subscribe to our viducate newsletter if you want further news about future media educational events or ideas for join-in activities. You can find the link on the bottom of the viducate home page (www.viducate.net).

Please mail us the links to your video productions and let us know about your experiences and learning outcomes with video projects.

We're looking forward to hearing from you.

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