**Video Production:**

**Powerful 21st Century Learning**

**Rob Campbell**

**California State University, Monterey Bay**

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**Professor Bude Su**

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Video Production: Powerful 21st Century Learning

Video media has been a part of education for some years now. In high school back in the 1980’s I had a teacher who regularly popped in a VHS of a movie and paired it with questions on morality, ethics, and society. Moving into the 1990’s, when I became a teacher, I saw the start of digital media in the schools, primarily video production and animation, and also experienced the work of community media centers. I have been teaching digital media since 1998, and I’ve seen video expand from the domain of digital media teachers like myself into core content classrooms such as English and Government.

I’ve believed, not without hubris, that video production and digital media are some of the most powerful and engaging programs in any school. The power of video production does things that are not possible in virtually any other class setting:

* Video production extends the traditional text without leaving reading and writing behind.
* Video production creates engagement because it is exciting, creative, and student centered enterprise, in sharp contrast to traditional learning under the sit, read, write, be silent model.
* Video production puts students into collaborative learning experiences that are similar to situations in the work world, where they must move a project forward, overcome differences within a team, fail, troubleshoot, develop teamwork, evaluate their own work, and meet deadlines.
* In the course of collaborative learning experience, students help each other develop social capital, the craft of successfully navigating a specific social space, acquire goods and services, and have learning needs met as a result of self-advocacy.

**New Media, New Literacy**

Until the 21st century, literacy has commonly referred to “print- and paper-based alphabetic literacy practiced by individual actors” (Smythe, Toohey, & Dagenais, 2014). “Traditionally, the term literacy has been used to refer to the skills that have to do with reading, writing and the use of texts” (Weilenmann, Säljö, & Engström, 2013). While traditional forms of reading and writing are still important, they are augmented and expanded by what has been loosely referred to as media literacy.

Reilly positions video media as part of the varied forms of text dating back to the invention of the printing press. By comparing primary features of text, including words, pictures, and the ways in which text is used to "read" and "write", which he later defines as "meaning making" activities. Video is seen as a form as important as print in terms of both interpreting and creating forms of information and narrative (Reilly, 1998).

In 1994, the New London Group coined the term “multiliteracies” to describe a range of “wide range of linguistic, cultural, communicative, and technological perspectives and tools” learners need to be successful in today’s media rich personal and professional environments. While the term was brought into existence in 1994, it is even more true today, and allows education be bridge a number of “cultural, linguistic, communicative, and technological” positions.

Video production deals with language in ways that include the traditional, but also add visual literacy to the puzzle by having them make decisions about to use shots, angles, composition, and timing to express their ideas. Including elements of sound and picture into the definition of text, by including video and multimedia into the kinds of text we ask learners to interpret *and create*, educators allow more entry points into the storytelling process.

The term “storytelling” can be misleading as it can be understood to be connected to narrative and fiction. While these kinds of stories are a powerful genre to involve and engage student filmmakers, storytelling also includes documentary pieces as well as works that interpret learning opportunities. While writing an essay sets the stage for expressing ideas based on researching a topic or a text, producing a video has students writing a concept, a script, and a storyboard, then using the camera and editing process to “write” in a different form. Weilenmann, Säljö, & Engström point out the “struggle with critical elements and develop insights and criteria for how the product of their work should appear” (2013). “Through videos students express themselves visually and share their stories with their peers in a unique way that goes beyond writing” (Doles, 2016).

**Video Production in Schools**

 Video production is showing up in the schools in a variety of ways, and is expected on a more regular basis across the curriculum. Students are asked as part of the new Common Core Standards to “Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea” (2013).

High School teachers are using video across the curriculum to connect students with content based learning in more engaging and potentially more learning-filled ways. Learning becomes more student-centered, representing a more self-directed position. Students take charge of their own learning because they are more invested in the outcomes they have designed (Moeller & Reitzes, 2011). Green’s research points to students having more “motivation and interest” when pursuing projects of their own design (2014).

Language development classrooms are also using video for powerful learning. In creating vidcasts, students appear to be learning language more effectively, and develop confidence in working together and seeing vidcasts in which they are shown practicing language (Green, 2014).

Video production as a course of its own has also proliferated in the last twenty years. Many schools have their own video production and/or multimedia classes, sometimes in collaboration with a local community media center. In these cases the entire curriculum revolves around in-depth use of video technology, editing, sound, and special effects. Students are engaged in the work of creating video products in a variety of genre. The work includes creating and developing an idea into a script, recording and performing in video, editing, finalizing, and publishing video. To do this they use a word processing program, use the internet to learn how to write and format scripts, backup video footage, edit, and render final films. Along the way they must use spoken and written language to plan and communicate, meet specific formatting requirements for written materials, and work with numbers when editing a final piece.

Technology leads the way all the way through each production, and the process is often student centered and even student led. The teacher creates opportunities for student learning. In spite of the hands off approach, how the content is structured determines the rate of success among students. Some finesse is required on behalf of the teacher in balancing how much control to exhibit over student projects. Too much control can reduce student ownership and creativity. Too little leaves them unsure about how to proceed or what kinds of things they should be thinking about in the processes of pre-production (writing and planning), production (shooting video), and post-production (editing).

**Cultural Capital as a Consequence of Video Production**

The many ways of using video media have a range of consequences, not just in the subject matter and the end projec, but in the process itself, which includes planning, writing, and often research of some kind, a well as collaborative work with peers and interacting with technology (Young & Rasinski, 2013).

Cultural capital is a theory developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to describe the ways in which individuals interact in social situations to complete projects, overcome learning barriers, and navigate specific social settings. Having a certain amount of cultural capital is a required to work in a collaborative team.

This near constant collaboration is new to many students. Some adapt quickly, while a few struggle with motivation, participation, and situations that may bring up insecurity and disengagement. The process is at times rough and rocky, with students disagreeing about who should do what, but often students rise to the occasion and discover within themselves the ability to get along with others and get the job done in a work-like environment. Students who may be marginal in some way as a result of ability or socioeconomic status may find an identity and excitement in video work that elevates their self opinion, and therefore how they position themselves among their peers.

Within the learning community there will be varying degrees of expertise. However when the student within a class or project group are focused on a joint project, each will bring their own skills to bear on the process, and the skills of the group’s members will rise in the process “While everyone in the community will have their own knowledge and expertise, it is important that every student knows who to ask when trying to overcome a particular task” (Doles, 2016). This has important implications on learning for the students, but it also creates visible satisfaction that is a joy to witness and to contribute to. The growth in individual students over the course of a year or several years as a result of these moments is without compare.

**Implications for Teachers**

Current content in the technology portion of teacher credentialing programs is too often limited to basic technologies in word processing and presentation software, along with a glance at tools for grading. New teachers learn the technology used at the school sites where they teach. While the level of technological proficiency rises with each new generation of teachers, credential programs or individual school sites must create training opportunities for new media and video.

“From brainstorming, to storyboarding, to filming, to narrating, to editing – many students find a niche in the filmmaking process that pushes them as learners, as contributors, as team players. As they shift from consumers to content producers, there is also a shift in ownership of the learning” (Desler, 2010).

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