

# 'Video Production as a Pedagogical Tool'

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## 1. Background of this handout

This handout would like to offer some ideas of how to use video production as a pedagogical tool. It is based on many years of video projects especially in primary schools across Europe. The main idea is that children become active video producers themselves.

Video production is a highly motivating activity for young children and brings something different into the daily teaching routine. The goal however is not that children learn how to use a video camera but that the technology becomes a means by which children engage with their own media world, the world they experience especially at home – this is **media education**.

This handout will give you a basic idea of this media educational approach, some ideas for your first video project and brief technical guidelines. We hope it will be helpful and inspiring and that you will join our team of European educators engaging with media education. Please send us your ideas and video material and we will include it in our European gallery of video projects and broadcast it on the Open Channel Berlin in our transmission slot.

## 2. What is media education?

A quote from *Robert Ferguson*:

"Media education is a kind of engagement with the world in which we live.

The study of media is not something that necessarily involves the taking of examinations although it may. It is something which is **about the world which the media represent**. So if you study the media you study the world. If you study the media you study your social existence and the social existence of others. You don't just study film and television or radio and newspapers or even the internet. They all relate to the way people live and it is my opinion that the importance of media education is because it is about studying the way people live."

Media education helps young (and old) people to interpret the media messages which confront them every day. It helps to look behind the intentions of the producers and media owners and then contributes to active and democratic citizenship.

Check out our [www.mediaeducation.net](http://www.mediaeducation.net) for more ideas about media education, especially the booklet "Media Education across the Curriculum" which is available in pdf and printed format or watch the short interview with our team on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gsmhujh-EF4>

### 3. Possible themes for your video project

Videos are an ideal medium for **exchanging** impressions of your class, your school or some of the activities you do together. The productions can develop into an active tool of exploration and investigation – of finding out together what is happening behind the obvious and visible.

Videos can be easily exchanged as **DVDs** or via **online streaming** and are an exciting form of communication between children from different countries.

The themes themselves can be linked to your **school subjects**. We have done projects related to the subjects of sport, history, biology and foreign languages (all themes are again on the [www.mediaeducation.net](http://www.mediaeducation.net)) but many other subjects are of course also possible. If you need an idea why not try:

- **Sport:** produce a short video about sport stars (and discuss how sport is represented on television)
- **History:** focus on a past event and ask the children to produce a short documentary (linking with the idea of the mediation of history)
- **Biology:** create short clips where the young people present themselves as advertising models (to discuss the whole area how bodies are represented in the advertising media)
- **Foreign languages:** present short clips where you show a few words of your own language (and discuss what we can see about other languages and cultures on television – see also the [www.speechbubbles.net](http://www.speechbubbles.net) project)

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 (you can find more ideas in the Television News on Europe project [www.23muskeltiere.de/europe.htm](http://www.23muskeltiere.de/europe.htm))

#### 4. What video camera do I need?

There is a range of technical tools available to record video material. This includes mobile phones, organisers, web and stills cameras and obviously **video cameras** themselves.

If you plan to do a 'proper' video project then you should really use a 'proper' video camera. There is a confusing range of different video cameras available at the moment. These can be easily grouped into standard video resolution (often called SD) and High Definition video resolution (HD).

**SD Cameras** have the possibility of storing the video footage on mini-DV tapes or other media. The traditional mini-DV tapes are still very useful for editing since the video footage is less compressed and they are compatible with most software. More recent storage solutions (mini-DVDs, flash cards and hard discs) have the advantage of fast access and good viewing options. The trend seems to go towards flash card cameras.

**HD Cameras**, as the name suggests, offer a resolution which is a lot higher and therefore looks visually better. At the moment there are two main different standards in the consumer market: 'HDV' and 'AVCHD'. It is clear now that AVCHD will become the new standard for HD cameras. The main problem with HD cameras is the editing. Most software packages are not compatible and the high compression of the AVCHD codec needs fast computers. Outputting HD material is also not very easy at the moment.

For every video camera it is very important that it has sockets for **external microphones** and **headphones**. External microphones are vital for interviews and headphones are needed to check that the microphone is working and that the sound quality is good enough. Most newer models don't have either, especially the cheaper ones.

**Our verdict:** There is no need or advantage in using HD cameras for educational use. Look for either a mini-DV (if you have a low budget) or flash card SD video camera with an external microphone input (Canon has models for both at the moment).

## 5. What editing setup is necessary?

Again there is a wide range of possibilities. All setups need a computer not older than 3 years with sufficient hard disk space and a **Firewire** interface for mini-DV / HDV cameras or **USB** interface for non tape video cameras. The entry range of editing software is included free of charge with Windows XP (**Movie Maker**) and Apple computers (**iMovie**). These are good enough for producing good quality films and can be used by children, especially if you have a computer room with either software installed already.

If you would like to develop your editing further and need more options in terms of more sound and video channels then you should check out programmes like **Pinnacle Studio** (very easy to use, can crash on some machines), **Adobe Premiere Elements** (hardware hungry and a bit more complex to use) and **MAGIX Video deluxe**. All programmes are for Windows, cost between 50 and 100 Euro and are more than good enough for video production in education.

The consumer High End editing options include **Adobe Premiere Pro**, **Sony Vegas** (both Windows) and **Final Cut Pro** or **Final Cut Express** (Macintosh). These programmes are very versatile and offer you lots more options especially with overlaying many moving and still images at the same time. They will need some time to get into though (upper secondary students might enjoy a bigger video project with any of these).

There are lots of **online tutorials** available to help you especially with the entry software. For example for Microsoft Movie Maker:

- o <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/getstarted/default.mspx>
- o <http://movies.atomiclearning.com/k12/moviemaker2/>
- o <http://www.windowsmoviemakers.net/Tutorials/>
- o <http://lehrerfortbildung-bw.de/werkstatt/video/wmmtut/> (in German)

and for Apple iMovie:

- o <http://www.apple.com/support/imovie/tutorial/>
- o <http://www.apple.com/support/manuals/imovie/>

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

If you are interested in **Linux** please check out our media education blog for more details: <http://mediaeducationnet.blogspot.com/>

## 6. How can I publish my videos online?

Streaming portals such as **YouTube** or **video.google.com** have become popular platforms for publishing video clips and can be a useful way to make your project known or visible to your wider partnership. There are also educational video platforms such as **teachertube.com** or **truetube.co.uk**.

All of these portals offer a free upload of your video clips. You need to create an account first. This is normally a straight forward procedure where you just include your name and set a password. Most portals will need an email verification before you can get started.

Then you can prepare your material. The video clips need to be encoded first with specific video encoders which are normally included with all editing packages. The platforms normally accept the following formats:

- **.wmv** (Windows Media)
- **.mov** (Quicktime)
- **.avi** (big file sizes!)
- **.mpg** (not very good compression)

The **.flv** (flash format) is not implemented yet but might come in the long run. There is additional technical information on the help pages of the portals. Find a good compromise of file size and quality to keep the uploading time short. It is normally enough to use a 320 by 240 pixel resolution.

The **uploading** can take a few minutes and needs a couple of days before the video clip can be accessed through the search function. Watching the clip requires a faster internet connection. Standard broadband rates are fine for ensuring short waiting times. Think beforehand about the description and the 'tags' you need to put in. If you want that other teachers can find your video you need to think carefully about what search criteria your audience might use.

The streaming portals can be also used for uploading your short (unedited) clips from mobile phones, organiser, 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.

## 7. How can I publish my videos on a DVD?

Obviously you would like to exchange your edited video material with your partners / colleagues. The DVD offers a higher picture and sound quality than online streaming.

The entry video editing packages such as Pinnacle Studio or Adobe Premiere Elements include a function for **authoring DVDs**, so there is no additional software necessary. iMovie also comes with iDVD which will navigate you through the DVD authoring process.

You can either burn one video film straight onto a DVD (without a menu) or programme a DVD with given menu templates so that the viewers can choose the film they would like to watch. This is obviously more time consuming and not always really necessary.

## 8. Join our media education courses

At least once a year we offer a media education course for European teachers in Berlin. If you have found this handout interesting then you might be interested in joining the team for one week in Berlin and explore 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 Socrates Agency for a place. Funding is not guaranteed and depends on the amount of applicants from your country. There are national deadlines for application which need to be followed. You find more details online: [www.23muskeltiere.de/course.htm](http://www.23muskeltiere.de/course.htm)



## 9. Subscribe to our newsletter

Subscribe to our newsletter if you want further news, ideas for join-in activities and future media educational events:

<http://join.mediaeducation.net/pages/newsletter.htm>

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You can find an updated version of this document online:

<http://www.mediaeducation.net/EN/videoGuide.htm>