



Moving Image Education in Wales

The Impact of Ffilmschool 2



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The Impact of Ffilmschool 2



Executive Summary

As the sole strategic body for film in Wales, the remit of the Film Agency for Wales is to ensure that the economic, cultural and educational benefits of film are fully realised and promoted in Wales. As part of that remit, the Film Agency has committed to ensuring that all young people aged 19 and under have the opportunity to learn about film, with all the benefits that flow from that as highlighted in this impact report.

In 2007 the Film Agency for Wales commissioned the University of Glamorgan Cardiff School of Creative & Cultural Industries to conduct an impact study of Ffilmschool 2, a year long project developed and implemented by Media Education Wales in conjunction with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, a Communities First area of South-East Wales. The study looked at the impact of Moving Image Education on supporting oracy, literacy and wider skills development with years 6 and 7 (9 - 11 year old children) over the course of the year.

Findings:

The impact study confirmed a growing body of verbal testimony on the significant benefits to young people of quality film and moving image education, as follows:

The development of participants' abilities in all of the target skill areas –

- Enhanced engagement with and skills in written communication
- Improved linguistic skills – communicating, engaging and listening attentively
- Improved social skills – 64% of respondents noting improved collaborative and creative interaction with an emphasis on peer-to-peer communication
- Improved articulation of emotional expression
- Enhanced ICT skills noted in 72% of respondents.

The Ffilmschool 2 project strongly connected to the principal goals of English learning within the National Curriculum, helping pupils to understand, engage with and produce varied media texts.

Furthermore, the project evidenced that Moving Image Education has a vital role to play within a holistic approach to learning in the 21st Century.

Recommendations:

- It is strongly recommended that teachers play a more active and leading role in integrating film within the curriculum
- Appropriate training should be provided to teachers to ensure consistent standards and best practice in technical skills, film language and understanding and appropriate teaching techniques
- A critical cinematic discourse should form the basis of creative learning
- Moving Image Education needs to be developed in a sustainable manner – including comprehensive and up-dated training, a cross-curriculum approach over the full range of pupil ages.

The evaluation ran from September 2007 to July 2008. This is the abridged version of that report, the full version of which is available at www.filmagencywales.com

For further information on the Film Agency for Wales' film education strategy and the UK-wide film education strategy Film: 21st Century Literacy, which was jointly formulated with the UK Film Council, BFI, Film Education, First Light, Skillset and the National and Regional Screen Agencies, please see: www.filmagencywales.com/education-strategy.php
www.21stcenturyliteracy.org.uk/.

“We live in a world of moving images. To participate fully in our society and its culture means to be as confident in the use and understanding of moving images as of the printed word. Both are essential aspects of literacy in the twenty-first century.”

FILM: 21ST CENTURY LITERACY.

A STRATEGY FOR FILM EDUCATION ACROSS THE UK



About this report

This is an edited version of an evaluation report into a year-long project which used Moving Image Education to support oracy, literacy and wider skills development with Years 6 and 7 in a Communities First area of South-east Wales.

Introduction

In 2007 the Film Agency for Wales commissioned the University of Glamorgan Cardiff School of Creative & Cultural Industries to research and evaluate Ffilmschool 2, a year long film education project developed and implemented by Media Education Wales in conjunction with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

The purpose of this initiative was to provide an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of Moving Image Education over the course of an academic year in a Communities First region of Wales, and make recommendations for film and Moving Image Education in the future.

As the sole strategic body for film in Wales, the Film Agency for Wales has a remit to ensure that all young people aged 19 and under in Wales have the opportunity to learn about film, whilst increasing the breadth, scale and ambition of film education initiatives across Wales.

The Film Agency supports film education to complement our central priority of creating and maintaining a dynamic film culture across Wales, developing our provision in the context of the UK-wide film education strategy Film: 21st Century Literacy (<http://www.21stcenturyliteracy.org.uk/>).

The evaluation ran from September 2007 to July 2008.

Context

The Ffilmschool 2 project coincides with a rising understanding that the nature of literacy is changing in the digital age:

“We live in an age when to be literate means to be as familiar with images on a screen as with text on a page, and to be as confident with a camera or a keyboard as with a pen.”

FILM: 21ST CENTURY LITERACY



Ffilmschool 2 was a year-long Film Agency for Wales funded Moving Image Education (MIE) project conducted in Briton Ferry in the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council area of South-East Wales during 2007-2008. The project was led by Tom Barrance from Media Education Wales and involved the artistic expertise of poet Lloyd Robson and musician Neil White.

Ffilmschool 2 served the growing emphasis within the national curriculum for ICT and media literacy. Its purpose was to demonstrate how Moving Image Education could be incorporated into the existing curriculum to improve and develop key skills in students from years 6 and 7 (the transition from primary to secondary school).

A cluster of five schools took part in the project: Melin Juniors, Ynysmaerdy Primary, Llansawel Primary, Brynhyfryd Primary and Cwrt Sart Comprehensive School. Students were trained in the creative use of music and poetry in film and were exposed to a range of examples of non-narrative films to stimulate their creative expression.

Approximately 136 individuals participated in the project. This included 123 children and 5 teachers.

The shared aims and objectives of the Ffilmschool 2 project were to:

- Enhance written communication skills
- Enhance and develop linguistic skills and verbal articulation
- Provide opportunities for collaborative group-based learning
- Support creative and critical expression
- Work with teachers and tutors to develop new and creative ways of using moving images in education
- Raise awareness in schools of the potential and ease-of-use of digital video
- Provide pupils with an awareness of film language and how it can be used effectively for emotional, social and creative expression
- Provide access to filmmaking activities for children, young people and others.

Research Methodology

Ethnographic observation and data gathering were the principal research methods used for developing this report. The data was gathered through observation, interviews and conversations with participants. The research used a qualitative approach, documenting the experiences of the pupils and teachers, in order to assess the impact and outcomes of the project.

Interviews with participating students were conducted on site during the workshops. Conducting interviews within the classroom enabled the students to share their immediate experiences and learning. All students who were interviewed brought to their responses examples of the work they were developing, skills they were learning or questioning, as well as the interrelations and dynamics within their groups.

Ffilmschool 2: The Structure

Drawing upon previous experience Media Education Wales wanted to move beyond short, one-off projects as they felt that sustained contact would have deeper and longer lasting impacts on the target pupils and their schools. The projects included three film-making workshops in each school, spread over the three terms of the academic year 2007-2008. At each stage the workshops focused on a specific themes. These are:

Stage 1: Film and poetry

Stage 2: Music and Film

Stage 3: Themes decided by participants

The video workshops spanned 3-5 days each. Each workshop included the following elements:

1. A half-day session on film language and aesthetics
2. Technical training in the use of the camera, music and editing software
3. Intervention of the musician or poet
4. Filming and editing
5. Feedback

Ffilmschool 2's emphasis focused on non-narrative cinema practices. Each workshop contained a component of film appreciation to introduce students to the vocabulary of film; to teach them how meaning is expressed in film; and to foster appreciation of cinema as a medium of art. The workshops specifically focused on non-narrative and non-mainstream cinema practices and used the work of filmmakers including Dziga Vertov and Jean-Luc Godard.

In the film appreciation sessions students were exposed to examples from experimental and avant-garde films from which they could derive ideas and approaches for a creative film practice, gaining an understanding of how films are constructed.

The workshops constantly questioned and encouraged students to consider communication of ideas and meanings not through literalisation but by working with montage principles of association, implication and suggestion of meanings and emotions. Students were also encouraged to take into account how audiences respond to films and derive meanings from them.

Ffilmschool 2: The Stages

Stage 1: Film and Poetry

The first stage of the project focused upon the relationship between poetry, the spoken word and film. Poet Lloyd Robson introduced the students to ideas of communicating emotion through poetry. They composed short poetic pieces which they performed orally and then used as the basis for filming.

Throughout this stage, the communication of emotion through writing and cinematography was emphasised and students' films displayed an emergent understanding of cinematographic principles.



“After the first stage of the project I was able to use words to talk about my mood which were not simply feeling “good” or “bad”, “happy” or “sad”. We used words that we would not usually use... I did not know that “frustration” was a kind of feeling, a kind of not feeling right.”

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Films developed in this stage of the project reflect students' attempt to film subjects from varied angles and compose frames that contain a dynamic foreground and action in the background. Further, most films deploy precisely timed cuts between shots. The cutting coincides with the lyricism of the spoken word. With reference to the spoken word i.e. voiceover in the films, students' diction is clear and their films reflect a confident use of accent without being incomprehensible. This meets the National Curriculum's objectives of oracy including the fluent and accurate usage of English in formal and informal situations as well as verbal articulacy in different contexts, for varied audiences.

Stage 2: Film and Music

The second stage of Ffilmschool 2 emphasised the use and role of music within film. Pupils were shown examples of films which had been selected to draw their attention to how music and sound convey emotion – for example, using the same film scene with different soundtracks. They were encouraged to respond to montage films such as Vertov's 'Man with a Movie Camera' and Reggio's 'Koyaanisqatsi'.

In this stage the students did not undertake any filming, but were provided with pre-edited silent montage clips and sequences for which they were required to compose music evoking specific emotions and mood transitions. This was gripping for most students because it alerted them to how meaning and feeling are constructed.



“I am really enjoying working with all the different kinds of sounds on the computer. But we have to remain focussed on what the ideas behind our film are. You cannot just put any piece of music that you like. We have to share our ideas in the group and if everybody agrees then we use a particular piece. In these workshops I am also speaking to more people.”

Student responses at this stage reflected an increasing sensitivity towards working in a group context, which is one of the outcomes emphasised in the National Curriculum's English requirements.

Stage 3: The final term's projects

Themes for the films in the third stage of the project were developed through dialogue with class teachers on the training day. The ideas that teachers suggested were rooted in their observations of how their students were responding to the materials in the video workshops.

“The video workshops have helped my writing because I am forced to focus on one thing at a time and think about it in-depth. I feel writing during the video workshops makes you think more about one thing at a time.”



The video workshops in this stage were more loosely structured, often spanning single days of work over successive weeks. Teacher participation increased markedly and in some classes, class teachers led particular sessions, directing tasks such as writing and filming.

Most students felt that in this stage of the project the creative and technical skills from the previous two stages of the project were brought together. Students felt that the project had facilitated their writing skills in a manner that was distinct from regular classroom writing exercises.

Key Outcomes of Ffilmschool 2

A broad survey of the Ffilmschool 2 project reveals that the video workshops intervened positively in all areas outlined in the project's aims. Creative development of participating students has been one of the key outcomes, with a series of accomplished short films emerging from the project. The video workshops provided students with the opportunity to experiment with, and express themselves through, filmmaking, music and writing. It is commonly believed that Moving Image Education projects impact students in terms of enhanced enjoyment, film knowledge and skills (especially critical skills and techniques), and social skills (especially teamwork.) While Ffilmschool 2 had these impacts on participating students, its specific intervention was that it exposed students to a critical, non-narrative cinematic discourse that has added to their film literacy. This is crucial because it has previously been observed that the outcomes for children from moving image projects are not largely distinct from other art forms.

Ffilmschool 2 however deployed specific aesthetic tools and therefore its impacts on students were of a specific nature. With the project emphasising non-narrative cinema practices and observational skills it impacted students' thinking and resulted in a body of films that explore themes linked to social space constructed through a poetic, visual vocabulary.

ICT skills

Students in all participating schools enthusiastically received the video workshops. Class teachers in all the participating schools have noted students' rising confidence in working with computers and cameras. One teacher stated; 'They have been introduced to new and advanced software, which has done a lot to their technical skills and confidence with technology.'

- 72% respondents to the survey questionnaire stated that the project enhanced their ICT skills and instilled a greater confidence in operating digital film equipment, Apple Mac computer software applications and ICT generally.
- Many students stated that they felt more relaxed in working with computers after attending the Ffilmschool 2 project workshops. They feel confident that in the future they will be able to understand the workings of computer software on their own.
- Many participants felt that the ICT training they received during the workshops will have longer-term use in a work context.

“We got to use electronic things – laptops, cameras, etc. This is very useful because we get exposure to up-to-date technology that people are using today. When you get older and do different jobs you need to know how to use different things and these workshops have really boosted our confidence in that respect.”



Linguistic skills

Participating students revealed an increased sensitivity towards the dynamics of verbal speech and interpersonal communication. The video workshops provided them the occasion to work with peers and develop conversations that are focused on a specific task.

- Through the workshops many respondents stated an increased alertness to social interaction and speaking within collaborative contexts.
- Many felt that the workshops facilitated individual self-expression, as they had been encouraged and supported to share personal ideas, opinions and preferences.
- Most students felt that they had been heard attentively and that they in turn had become more attentive and responsive listeners.



“In these workshops I have started to speak with more people. Usually in class I do not speak unless I am sure of the answer or whatever I am saying. Here whatever you think in your mind you have to speak it out otherwise we will not function as a group. I have to express my feelings and ideas.”

Social skills

Working in a group facilitated interaction among students, forging of new peer relationships and developing a distinct social sensibility appropriate for purposeful creative collaboration. Such focussed interaction meets with the requirements for group work enlisted in the National Curriculum for English.

- Most pupils stated that the Ffilmschool 2 workshops allowed them interaction with other pupils that they would not otherwise have had.
- 64% of respondents added that the video workshops provided them with social skills for working in peer-to-peer groups and improved their ability to work collaboratively and creatively.
- The video workshops acted as a kind of “third space” between formal school lessons and recreation, introducing pupils to learning beyond the conventional classroom setting.
- The pupils’ response to working with practitioners and trainers other than their teachers was also noted as developing their interaction with their local and wider community.
- The majority of participants in Ffilmschool 2 stated that the video workshops had increased their confidence in responding to questions and prompts and taking part in group discussion.



“Working in a group has helped me to get on better with different people. We have had to interact with and talk to people in our groups who aren’t usually our friends. Someone expresses an idea and then we all see whether it works or doesn’t and if it doesn’t we try to see how that can be used with some changes.”

Emotional skills

The Ffilmschool 2 project exposed students to how audio-visual materials evoke emotional impacts in the viewer. Different exercises of the video workshops emphasised the possibilities of emotional expression. Students were required to develop the interrelation between image and sound in terms of a single or a set of emotions/ feelings/ moods.

- Participants reported that during the Ffilmschool 2 project pupils developed a wider vocabulary for the discussion and expression of emotions and moods.
- Many pupils stated that because of the video workshops they felt increased confidence in discerning specific emotions and communicating them verbally in varying social contexts.
- The film-making process allowed the pupils to understand subjective experience and how film language can be used for emotional expression.

Written skills

Segments of the video workshops integrated writing exercises with filmmaking. This took the form of composing poems as in the first stage of the project, and composing prose in the third stage of the project.

- By the end of the project, most students expressed an increased interest in writing.
- Respondents to the survey questionnaire stated that the video workshops facilitated their writing by training them in observation skills and enhancing their range of verbal expression.
- Pupils also stated that the film-making process made concepts such as metaphor less abstract as they were able to apply them in a functional context.
- Teachers stated that the video workshops provided their pupils with a space and focus for their writing assignments, and that English and video practice could be developed in a complementary fashion.
- Some of the participants noted a significant improvement in the quality of writing among pupils, with their writing becoming more thoughtful and descriptive.

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“I feel that my writing has improved after the video workshops. The workshops have sharpened my listening skills and I feel the entire process has added to my vocabulary, whether it is in creative writing or just group conversations. I feel I can express myself better and in my writing I am beginning to understand the value of detail and description.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the outset, the Ffilmschool 2 project aimed to show how Moving Image Education could be incorporated into the existing curriculum to improve and develop key skills in pupils aged between 9-11 years old.

Ffilmschool 2 was strongly connected to the principal goals of English learning within the National Curriculum, helping pupils to understand, engage with and produce varied media texts including avant-garde and critical cinema practices.

The Ffilmschool 2 project developed participants' abilities in all of the target skill areas: ICT, linguistic, social, emotional and written skills. The project encouraged participants to be self-reflective and critical of their work and processes in the spirit of learning through self-initiative and improvement. It provided collaborative peer-to-peer learning, and developed individual confidence in those pupils taking part.



“Most of us feel that the group work in the workshops has affected our speaking skills. We feel more confident and can articulate our ideas and opinions while engaging with the ideas of other pupils.”

Ultimately the project revealed that Moving Image Education has a vital role to play within a holistic approach to learning in the 21st Century. Such workshops and sessions which focus on developing media literacy through avant-garde and critical cinema practices should be integral to classroom learning across the curriculum, rather than existing as isolated, externally conducted projects. Essential to this is the active involvement and training of teachers in film reading and understanding alongside LEA staff and film and Moving Image Education practitioners.

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In order to realise this vision for Moving Image Education in Wales, this report makes the following recommendations:

It is strongly recommended that teachers play a more active and leading role in integrating film within the curriculum

- Teachers should be provided with training in technical skills, film language and understanding, and teaching techniques in order to lead their classes in film and video production.
- Teachers should be actively involved in devising future Moving Image Education activities for use across the curriculum, as their suggestions and ideas will reflect pupils' capability, interests and needs.
- Moving Image Education activities need to be devised across the curriculum according to individual subject needs.

In devising future Moving Image Education components, a critical cinematic discourse should form the basis of creative learning.

- Moving Image Education activities should allow pupils to appreciate and understand film beyond the realms of mainstream and commercial film and television practice.
- Pupils should be taught how to critique film in order to develop their film-making ability.

Moving Image Education needs to be sustainable

- Moving Image Education should be developed with the external support and expertise of existing and future practitioners, in the form of regular training sessions for teachers and LEAs.
- Moving Image Education should be introduced into the curriculum and developed over successive years, and not confined only to the school transition years 6 and 7.
- Moving Image Education should progressively shift emphasis from collaborative to individual projects, deepening pupils' individual understanding and film-making practice.



“I strongly think that the video workshops introduced them to different ways of looking at things. This was certainly the case with the cinematography principles they were taught – the use of different angles, conscious observation i.e. looking rather than just seeing – all these were taught to them with grounded explanations. But I think this kind of learning needs to be sustained so that students can really absorb what they are learning and apply it to different contexts. On the whole, I think the Ffilmschool project has positively contributed to the sense of inclusiveness in the class.”

TEACHER: FFILMSCHOOL 2 PROJECT

For further information visit: www.mediaedwales.org.uk/ffilmschool2, which has examples of the students work and a short practical description of Ffilmschool 2.

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MEDIA EDUCATION WALES
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