Activity: The 'Life-History' video project

Addresses: Teamwork; Conflict Resolution; Intercultural Competence; Project Development & Management

Aims/Intended Learning Outcomes:
At the end of this activity, students should be able to:

- Describe visual and narrative evidence acceptable to show the competencies of intercultural understanding and conflict management
- Plan and construct a story-book for an 8 minute video production to show the targeted competencies
- Construct a timeline and a budget for a short video production
- Operate video recording equipment including making decisions on location, cast, lighting, permissions etc.
- Manage and/or carry out video editing
- Evaluate the success of the activity

Time required: The time for the activity falls into two distinct categories: the time for pre-production and post-production meetings and then the time for the production itself. Pre- and post-production sessions and the filming or production stage. Two pre-production sessions were planned and one post-production and evaluation session. Each of these sessions lasted from 90 to 120 mins each.

Group size: The minimum size of the group for this activity is four due to the amount of work involved and the upper limits should be set at 8 or 9 due to the need for considerable coordination on the project.

Context/setting: The setting for the pre- and post-production sessions is a classroom or other meeting room that can accommodate up to 12 people. The room should ideally have a computer, data projector and an internet connection in order to be able to stream examples of video shorts. The filming itself can take place in any number of sessions. In the case used as the basis of this description, a mobile camera mounted on a cycle helmet was used to video places that were relevant to the story-line. Other locations were used around the university campus

Description:

In the first pre-production session, an introduction was given by the trainer to the competencies that were the focus of the project: intercultural communication, conflict management and resolution and finally, project management. It is pointed out that the film project itself is to be project managed.. This included a short discussion of the rubrics developed by the DARE+ project for levels of achievement with students.

The second stage is also introduced by the trainer and consists in the suggestion that the recent life-history of an international student at the university could well be suitable to investigate how students cope with, become aware of and demonstrate the competencies of intercultural communication and conflict resolution as they negotiate their first months in a new culture.

The next step is for students to consider first the types of situation [social situations, accommodation issues, academic culture differences etc] that would demonstrate intercultural issues and possible conflict resolution.

Finally, in this session, the students consider how they will recruit a possible 'actor' and how they will present the project to a possible participant.

The task then is to return to the next session with suggestions for possible participants and story-line ideas.

The second session is devoted to the selection of a participant and the construction of a story-board for the film.

The first stage is to hear the presentations for perhaps more than one possible participant. If there is just the one suggestion then this stage is missed. The second stage is then to discuss the 'scenes' that should make up the story-board. Here the trainer reminds the group of the competencies that should be clear and demonstrated in the film. It happens that students get very involved in other considerations at this point and need to be pointed to back to the competencies. A story board is then constructed either on paper or as a series of powerpoint slides that can easily be revised and changed.

The final task of this session is to decide on roles: sound, camera-person, time-frame for filming. Care needs to be taken here to plan in such a way that the project timetable does not clash with examination or assignment preparation and it is a good idea to have the university calendar at hand.

Following the pre-production sessions, the next stage is to produce the film. This consists in filming for about 20 to 30 minutes in a number of locations and with keeping the themes of the project clearly in mind. This stage can take a number of days and, in the case that serves as an example here, the times for filming

were set to happen during one week. The time taken for editing should be reckoned at 2 or 3 sessions of 2 hours each. These sessions can be conducted without the presence of the trainers allowing the students to work on their own.

The final session in the activity is when the finished film is reviewed by the whole group again including the trainers. This takes place in a seminar room and consists in some suggestions for further editing but also, and most importantly, in a review of the way in which the film succeeds in demonstrating the competencies. This session will take about 2 hours.

Some follow-up work may be done to the film but then it can be presented to a wider audience. in the case of the example, a number of college officials were interested in the film also for its possibilities for promotional possibilities.

Materials needed: a seminar room with AV equipment and a connection to the internet. A hand-held digital video camera, basic film editing software. Lots of paper and pens for constructing a story-board.

Behind the activity: It is useful for the trainer to do some basic background research on film-making and in the construction of a story-board for a film. Such materials are easily available on line.

Any other comments: This is an activity that attracted very good participation and was carried out with enthusiasm. The challenge came at the stage of editing and the group found a fellow-student who had some experience of this work to assist them with the editing. A review of at the end of the project showed quite clearly how many of the elements of the project management competence were developed in the course of carrying out this activity.