

## VIDEO PODCAST (VODCAST) – PEDAGOGICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CREATIVE STRATEGY “CREATING YOUR OWN DIGITAL CONTENT”

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**Abstract:** The study examines the use of videocasting as a specific form of the “learner-generated videos” pedagogical strategy and its impact on the three main areas of learning – knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The benefits for the knowledge and skills, and in general for the cognitive behavioral experience that the learners acquire through such contextualized and active actions, are proven by numerous studies and were naturally reconfirmed in the current video podcast creation process. Therefore, the present study focuses on the learners’ attitudes (without neglecting the first two – knowledge and skills), how they evaluate their experience, and the value of the specific pedagogical tool. In this activity, the teacher’s assumption was confirmed that the video podcast created by the students is an active, interesting, engaging, and motivating form for them to acquire and consolidate several valuable skills, which will give them practical experience in situ, a sense of meaningful learning, authenticity, autonomy, collaboration, and confidence in their subsequent professional realization.

**Keywords:** video podcast; videocast; learner-generated video content; meaningful learning; project-based learning; active learning; learning through experience

Video learning is a concept highly relevant in both secondary and higher education. The frequency of its use as a didactic tool now allows it to be removed from the “innovation” column and defined as a standard teaching tool. There is extensive literature that focuses on teacher activity related to video in education that explores the functions of video (Koumi, 2013; Hansch

et al., 2015); the production (Millerson, Owens, College, 2008; Musburger, Kindem, 2009; [Anonymous, 2023]), the effectiveness of the video (Guo et al., 2014; Buchner, 2018) and its quality implementation in the situation of learning (Chuang, Rosenbusch, 2005; Zhang et al., 2006; Blomberg et al., 2014; Yousef et al., 2014; Brame, 2015). The wide availability and variety of technological means for creating audio-visual content also led to the pedagogical strategy – student-generated video. This has become an area of interest for many researchers, particularly the current studies examining various aspects of this phenomenon. To adhere to the maxim that the “goals and tasks of the training should be aligned to the greatest extent with the goals and interests of the student” (Stoykov, 2001:87), we implemented a video podcast created by learners in the curriculum of students from various specialties of the Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies studying multimedia technologies. The inquiries from various studies mentioned below, related to the benefits of audio-visual production by learners in a variety of forms, have led us to believe that these contextualized and active activities will prove to be an advantageous tool for the achievement of several valuable and mandatory skills, which the individual graduating from higher education is required to possess according to current educational standards.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the application of media in education, it is considered that reading a text or watching a video are fundamentally different experiences from writing a text or creating a video – one is interpreted as a passive learning method, and the other as an active effort on the part of the receiver of the information. The significance of the active form of knowledge building by the learners themselves is given by the constructivist educational direction, whose primary educational approach to teaching and learning is the so-called learning by doing (Dewey, 2002). The independent creation of video clips resonates with this model of thinking since the principles that constructivism provides as a frame of reference for the meaningful learning process are to create conditions for: active cognitive reorganization; opportunities for constructive and individual upgrading; situated and authentic learning in realistic contexts; media and instrument-mediated learning and the associated meaning system; targeting the development of self-monitoring and self-control of the learning process (Duffy, Cunningham, 1996).

Constructing learning environments that bring together different aspects of experience enables learners to adapt their own constructs and interpretations of knowledge to its application in practice and real-life (Hung, Looi, Koh, 2004). In this sense, “active learning methods create the best opportunity for the student from the object of learning to become the

subject of the learning activity, ... thereby realizing the highest degree of activity – self-learning, and self-education – which is one of the ultimate goals of the learning process” (Stoykov, 2001:91).

Lambert (2013) classifies a hierarchical taxonomy of media application as part of digital storytelling.



Figure 1. Lambert - taxonomy of media practices. The spectrum of degree of participation in media creation.

At the base of the pyramid, as seen from Fig. 1, surfing the mass media and the Internet are placed as ways of constructive consumption of information, in its sense of an unconscious form of editing and construction of a story. The author argues that constantly jumping from one web page to another or from one TV channel to another is a form of inventing one's narrative version. As a model of semi-authorship, digital storytelling constructed in context includes three forms of creative expression – games; fan-made media, where “fans construct their versions of media related to the story, either using clips made available from a show or constructed on their own media in the style or within the narrative world of the show.” (Lambert, 2013:40); and modeling, which combines different content by mixing elements of existing (audio-visual) media with your content, for example, adding a new voiceover to an existing video or adding a slide show over a famous song. The next two sections of the spectrum – collaborative and assisted construction – Lambert links to the perspective that the creation of media artifacts is part of a learning process where audio-visual storytelling is seen not simply as sharing on the Internet

but also as following a particular technology in media production – a process in which the learner follows certain steps and is guided and supported by a teacher. At the top of the pyramid, we have the DIY approach, where the students/digital content creators themselves are the main drivers of creation. They consider their approaches to the three stages that accompany creating an audio-visual product – ideation, organization, coordination of the preproduction stage; directing, shooting, recording, collecting visual elements at the production stage; editing and sharing the finished product in the post-production stage. “Thus, through a structured approach covering the various aspects of audio-visual production, learners develop research, collaboration, organizational, technological, communication, presentation, creativity, and other skills” ([Anonymous, 2023:29]).

Interpreting Edgar Dale’s Cone of Experience (Dale, 1969) – a model explaining the relationship between the number of senses involved and the percentage of learning material absorbed – Bijmens, Vanbuel, Vestegen & Young (2004) redefined them according to the increasing degree of student involvement in the audio-visual experience and allow for the prospect that a high level of personal activity promotes better learning. In their descriptive approach in trying to outline the relationship between the application of video in education and its relative pedagogical value, they place the creation of their own video clip as the form with the highest degree of learner engagement in the learning process. This type of pedagogical activity provides the opportunity to develop professional knowledge through emotional and creative activity and to learn to be active in creation instead of passive perception.

Based on the importance of moving from passive experience to active creation, Shewbridge and Berge (2004) see video production as a natural urge that learners exhibit that educators should take advantage of. As a didactic tool, the creation of videos by learners provides opportunities for acquiring media literacy, where the presence of active learning, experiential learning, and a relatively high degree of motivation are easily visible. That gives reason to state that the strategy can be implemented as part of the practical method in learning to catalyze meaningful learning (Jonassen et al., 1999), defined as such in the sense of its characteristic qualities – constructiveness, activity, cooperation, conscious deliberation and authenticity.

As far as authentic learning is concerned, it is associated, on the one hand, with classroom simulation of standard practices that are characteristic of knowledge related to the target subject area and, on the other hand, with the creation of real opportunities for learners to participate in real practical engagement in a professional environment, as “participation in practice can be a condition for effective learning” (Radinski, Bouillion, Lento, Gomez, 2001:407). Hung, Looi & Koh reflect on Korzybski’s (1941) famous phrase “the map is not

the territory” in support of using qualitatively different paradigm-situated knowledge. In this sense, the representation and simulation of activities in the classroom is a kind of representation of reality, teaching at the “map” level, and “the level of description results in the learners not having a chance to experience the phenomenon themselves, and thereby not being able to understand nor exploit the knowledge provided at such a description level” (Hung, Looi, Koh, 2004:197). Of course, the “maps” in themselves are valuable and inescapable. They make up the basis of knowledge, and are sometimes the only thing that makes possible the presentation of knowledge in areas that mainly deal with abstractions; when it comes to these maps, the theory cannot be experienced. The situated perspective – the “territory” – allows for first-person interpretation, which generally develops expertise that can easily be transferred to subsequent real professional life contexts.

In their study examining the authenticity of learner-developed video projects, Kearney and Schuck concluded that “In contrast to more traditional tasks where materials and processes are imposed on students by teachers,” digital video projects, where the design, production, and evaluation stages are performed entirely by the learners themselves, “required a high degree of student initiative.” (Kearney, Schuck, 2006:206) and enhance their motivation.

Immersing learners in a real-world environment is one of the characteristics of authentic tasks proposed by Reeves, Herrington, and Oliver (2002), presented as a framework for authentic activities. Some of the features within it that we recognized as supporting the assumption that the implementation of a student-generated video podcast will lead to the creation of a contextualized, structured, meaningful, motivating, and effective learning path are related to activities:

- that have real-world relevance;
- which are accompanied by problems to solve which are open to different interpretations;
- which require a significant investment of time and intellectual resources;
- which provokes collaboration;
- which enables both individual and social feedback
- which have added value and lead to results extending beyond those set out in the specific subject area.
- that create a fully professionally maintained product.

Video podcasting is a method well adapted to the specified conditions for authentic learning and allows the learner to demonstrate the acquired skills in a real environment.

Research focusing on learner-generated video clearly shows that this kind of more multimodal and learner-centered pedagogy plays an active, motivating, engaging, and productive role in the learning process and

enhances learning by increasing learner motivation and positive emotions (Hung et al., 2004; Pirhonen, Rasi, 2017). The psychological (educational) assumption that “emotionally charged events are remembered better than neutral events” (Medina, 2011:85), translated into pedagogical language, means that “if the main activities in which the student is brought up are experienced with positive emotions and feelings, the effectiveness of the educational impact is guaranteed” (Stoykov, 2001:55). This necessitates the general conclusion that the emotional coloring of the cognitive process is of great importance for the lasting and reliable internalization of the individual's cognitive-behavioral experience.

The TML – Teaching Meaningful Learning pedagogical profile (Hakkarainen, 2007; Hakkarainen, Saarelainen, Ruokamo, 2007) addresses the ideas of a type of teaching that leads to meaningful learning by implementing the mechanism of video production by learners as a form of project-based and problem-based learning. The profile offers a model with 17 essential characteristics of the educational process, which would favor achieving the two primary outcomes for meaningful learning – mastery of domain-specific knowledge and skills and their transfer.

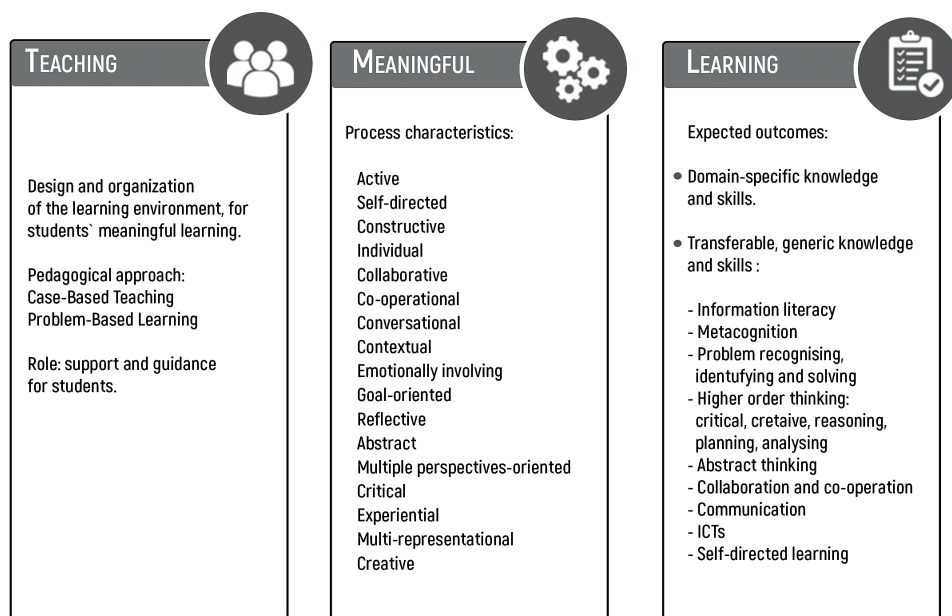


Figure 2. Meaningful Learning Model – Hakkarainen's TML.

As shown in Fig. 2, the meaningful learning process should provoke activity, self-direction, constructiveness, individuality, collaboration, contextuality, goal-orientedness, self-analysis, diversity of perspectives, criticality, willingness to experiment, and creativity. They may not all be present at any given moment. However, as Hakkarainen argues, this need not be, as some of the features “can be intertwined, interdependent, interactive and partly overlapping” (Hakkarainen, 2011:39).

The theoretical regularities indicated so far convincingly lead us to the logical formulation that the video podcast has the potential to be a successfully used method for achieving high and long-lasting results since it represents a complete process of creation, from beginning to end, that combines a rich palette of skills – communication, organizational, collaboration skills, presentation, technical (video and sound), creative, social sharing skills.

### VODCAST (VIDEO PODCAST, VIDEOCAST)

Simply put, a videocast is a video version of a podcast. We can think of a podcast as a radio broadcast (audio file) being uploaded to the Internet and easily accessible from a computer or media player. The podcast is so strongly enforced because of its easy technological realization. No knowledge is required to express and spread their thoughts and ideas globally. The presence of a microphone and a computer is necessary, and the possibility of this kind of communication is feasible practically for anyone who wants to or has something to say. That gives access to a huge potential audience, which “was a privilege once reserved only for large corporations and governments, but podcasting has changed everything. The individual has been empowered and given an equal voice” (Geoghegan, Klass, 2007:2). With the addition of cameras (and the equipment that necessarily goes with them) and thanks to YouTube’s policy of keeping the platform open to user-generated media, the videocast phenomenon has become relevant these days.

Video content is viral on social media, and it is well known that audiences engage much more with video than with any other form of information presentation. To see this, one only needs to check the statistics of one’s own Facebook or Instagram channel – it is no coincidence that Instagram has evolved into an opportunity to share short videos. Marketers argue that video creates more content value and builds more profound connections with audiences when people’s faces are added; expanding access to a broader audience with more potential opportunities (www.castos, 2023); they recognize the video podcast as a great way to increase authority in the specific field that develops a relationship of trust with the target community (Riverside.fm team, 2023); the video podcast is an excellent formal alternative to promote reliable and authentic information (Arango, 2023).

The multi-layered activities that the creation of a video podcast entails place it in the position of an appropriate learning situation and a relevant bridge between theory and practice through which learners can travel in an enjoyable and, at times, funny but responsible way along the learning spiral of success. They go through all the necessary steps requiring deep intellectual work. The steps follow the typical stages of any video production – pre-production, production, post-production, sharing, of course, according to the characteristics of the specific type of video. Going through them sequentially offers a comprehensive and complete understanding of the process.

The pre-production phase (Fig. 3.), in which the video strategies and objectives are clarified, is of utmost importance – it allows the building of a lean and precise organization so that the moment of launching the cameras can be set in the most efficient way possible. That usually includes:

- Planning, which sets the parameters at the macro level;
- Researching the possible locations for filming and finding the optimal one and researching the expert who will be interviewed;
- Creating and breaking down a scenario (description of the time of day for filming, location, participants, clothing, props, if needed);
- A shooting schedule, which must be available to all participants;
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the team;
- Considering the technical parameters (type and number of cameras, their location, accompanying equipment – batteries, chargers, memory cards, tripods;
- Lighting, provision of sound recording – a microphone, recording device, cables).

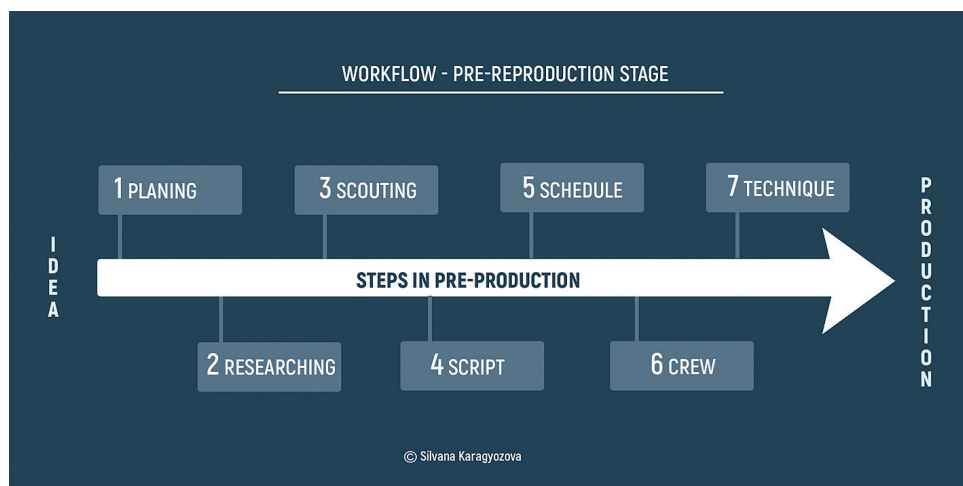


Figure 3. Workflow at the pre-production stage.

The production stage (Fig. 4.) represents the actual shooting. That is usually the most fun and easy moment (when it comes to a video podcast, not some more complex audiovisual genre), and if everything in the previous stage is appropriately communicated. The phase begins with setting up the scene – placement, and settings of video equipment, lighting, and sound. This is followed by welcoming the expert guest, relaxing him, and predisposing him to a calm and relaxed demeanor in front of the cameras, both before the start of shooting and during his shooting, which indirectly develops the individual's soft skills – empathic listening, conversational skills, monitoring non-verbal communication, accepting feedback, being assertive, being adaptable.

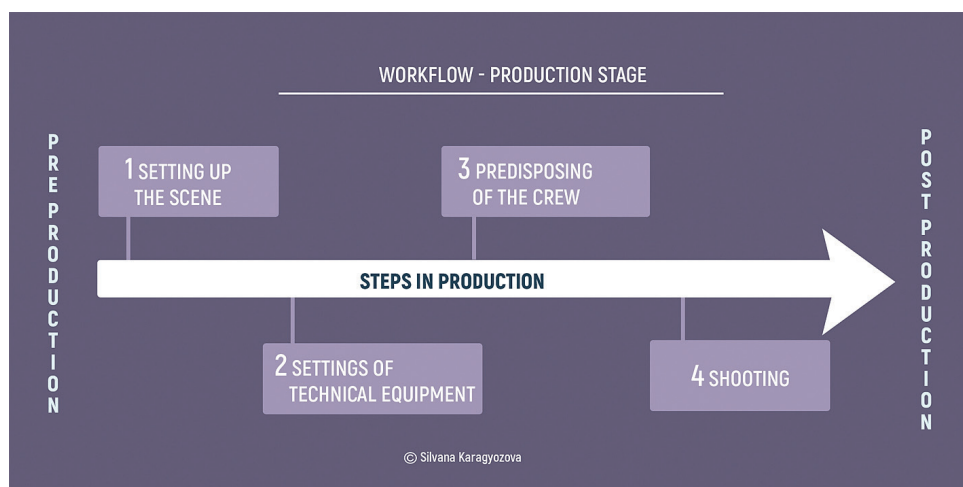


Figure 4. Workflow at the production stage.

The post-production stage (Fig. 5.) is the “glue” that brings all the individual components into a complete and finished look. The first step in the post-production workflow involves synchronizing the video and audio stream, cutting out the excess from all the frames, and assembling them using a variety of techniques such as following the rules of smooth editing and applying basic effects. Next is the placement of graphics – animated or not, which includes captions, name banners (lower thirds), questions, subtitles, and end credits. Visual effects are not mandatory to include in video production, especially for a lighter form like the podcast. However, it may be necessary to apply more specific techniques such as rotoscoping, chroma-keying, 3D animation, compositing, etc. Working with sound is a critical phase, including cleaning up the sound, adding sound effects and music, and mixing. Color correction and grading is the penultimate step of

the process and involves adjusting the color parameters of the video signal to unify the different cameras and give a specific tone, mood, and atmosphere. It is important to distinguish between color corrections and grading because they are different. Color correction refers to adjusting white and black levels, exposure, contrast, and white balance to get a correct image. That ensures that subsequent grading adjustments will not result in unwanted artifacts in the color information. Grading, however, is more about styling the image using different color schemes with varying degrees of intensity. There is professional consensus that “color correction refers to a process that is more technical in nature, of making adjustments to correct clear qualitative problems in an image, bringing it to a fairly neutral state, whereas grading refers to a more intensive process of developing an appropriate overall style for the image, relative to the narrative and artistic needs of a program” (Hurkman, 2014:18). Exporting is all about outputting the finished video in the appropriate file format for the chosen social platform where it will be shared.

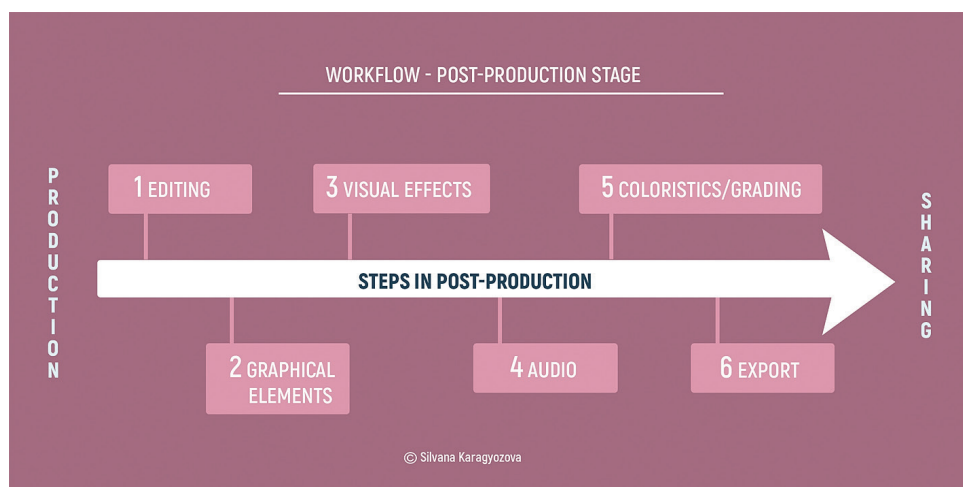


Figure 5. Workflow at the post-production stage.

Sharing includes not only uploading the finished file to the chosen platform but also its verbal packaging and presentation. Some unwritten rules have been established as working solutions thanks to the practice accumulated over the years:

- The title must be attention-grabbing because each podcast competes for attention with several thousand other podcasts;
- The description of the content should be of a low level of detail, i.e., relatively short since it does not aim to tell the whole content in detail but to mark the most important and main points of it;

- It is recommended to include in the description links to references (URLs to websites) mentioned in the video podcast;
- It is appropriate to add chapters for the different topics to navigate through the content easily;
- It is desirable to add relevant keywords to identify the podcast in the Internet space better;
- Entering a contact email is optional, but recommended when more formal communication is important;
- It is preferred to allow comments under the post to receive feedback.
- The comments will probably not only be positive but there will be some with a critical tone because different people with different worldviews and expectations will watch and listen to the podcast. At first glance, a person will want to respond to the moment, but this is not mandatory. Here, it is important to observe netiquette and not take the comment to a personal level. Responding makes sense if the comment makes a valid point and the feedback is constructive.

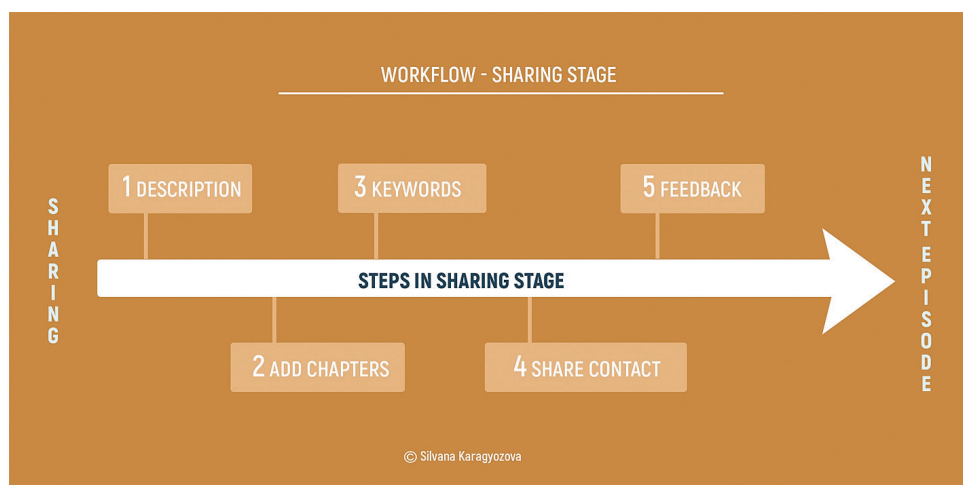


Figure 6. Workflow at the sharing stage.

Considering not only the pros of creating a video podcast but also the difficulties that accompany the process, both from a teaching and student perspective, we set out to create not just another contentless “digital noise” in the Internet space but a valuable, high-quality and meaningful product to establish itself as a place to discuss professional topics with experts in the audiovisual field.

## BASIC TEACHING HYPOTHESES

Based on everything said so far, we decided to introduce the medium of learner-generated video in the form of a video podcast with the presumption of achieving an attractive form for students to acquire and consolidate knowledge and skills, which would give them real practical experience in situ, a sense of authenticity, autonomy, collaboration, and confidence in their subsequent professional realization. The activity meets all three criteria for achieving authentic achievements (Newmann, 1996:16):

- Construction of knowledge, in which learners define, transform, classify, demonstrate, analyze, summarize, organize, synthesize, interpret, formulate, evaluate, and summarize information (Bloom, 1956);
- Study/research of the discipline that integrates the three important intellectual activities – acquiring the basic knowledge of the subject area, building it to a deeper understanding of the problems, and communicating and expressing the acquired material in the form of making a finished product that shows the qualitative transformation of cognitive understanding into practical competence;
- Value beyond the educational institution, which is related not simply to the educational documentation of the learner's competence but to the addition of cultural and social value to the product, which can be shared and positively impact professional communities of similar interest.

The teaching assumption that a video podcast can provide relevant context and be a logical stimulus for meaningful learning finds justification in project-based learning concepts. In creating the particular audiovisual form, the emphasis is on situated learning, which focuses on problems that learners would encounter in a natural professional environment. Open-ended generative tasks are also provided, where there is no one correct solution or approach, which challenges learners to seek and offer individual opinions and judgments and, together with the whole group, make the most rational choice. Project-based learning “encourages learners to be more motivated and engaged in an activity that is meaningful and relevant to them. If an activity is more relevant to learners' lives, they will devote more time and effort to the activity, which may lead the student to a deeper understanding of the learning task” (Hung, Keppell, Jong, 2004:429). We can hypothesize that this more profound engagement with the target content is a factor that contributes to the long-term retention of acquired skills and knowledge. Engagement, on the other hand, is an indicator of enhanced internal motivation and positive emotional involvement of learners, which are the most important characteristics of good learning situations (Soini, 1999; Pekrun, 2007) and whose provision guarantees excellent educational achievements.

Numerous studies have explored the value of the tasks associated with student-generated digital videos, observed the process's results, and found alignment between them and the pedagogical goals associated with the tool. The specific sub-goals we linked to potential outcomes, explicitly creating a video podcast, overlapped with Schuck and Kearney's (2004) synthesis of developing video production skills, on-camera literacy, media literacy, presentation skills, in-depth understanding of subject content, increase in an autonomous mode of work/behavior, increase in commitment to the learning process and motivation. We justified the general goal-setting with the already considered, established, and verified conclusions in the field and linked it to developing a deeper understanding of the processes related to the technology of creating a quality audiovisual product, and in particular, a video podcast; enhancing the sense of autonomous and authentic learning; creating conditions for active learning; higher motivation of students; building conditions for group project-based activity; developing basic digital competences, especially in their digital content creation and problem-solving part.

Such a study could not be completed without referring to the DigComp 2.2 framework (Vuorikari, Kluzer, Punie, 2022), which describes in detail the digital skills that modern education should provide given the highly imposed digitalization of almost every social and professional sphere. The areas of competence in the proposed framework are:

- Ability to appropriately interact with data and information (review, search, selection, evaluation, guidance);
- Contact and collaboration (interaction, sharing, collaboration through digital technologies and digital identity management);
- Creation of digital content (creation, integration, and processing of digital content in compliance with copyrights and licenses);
- Safety (protection of personal data, compliance with the rules of use, and fair sharing of author's works);
- Solving problems (problems of a technical nature related to identifying technological challenges and creative approaches in using digital technologies).

Creating a video podcast is a tool that develops a highly specialized level of skill acquisition in students. Considered in more detail, preparing for the next episode, the students study the invited expert in detail, apply an adaptation strategy, select the necessary information, and filter out the irrelevant ones. In the process of creating the product, students share knowledge, give ideas, define the digital identity of the series, consider how the content fits the reputation of the academic environment, support each other technically and creatively, adapt to specific problem situations

by offering diverse solutions, discuss together the post-production stage, for the final product to be exciting and in line with modern trends. Sharing the product to the YouTube channel is carried out according to all the mechanisms and rules for the protection of personal data that the platform provides and the protection of copyright in creating the product. Each podcast episode is pre-screened by the guest expert to obtain their complete agreement that the content is appropriate and can be digitally shared as such. In terms of presenting problem situations in which the learners are provoked to show abilities to solve them, the video podcast is a tool fully in line with the methods of acquiring the specific digital competence since the cases that arise can be of any nature and accompany each stage from its creation – from ideation, through organization and implementation, to its finalization.

We chose the student-produced video podcast as a situational learning approach focused on applying already acquired knowledge, where learners are placed in complex and somewhat unpredictable real-world situations that require flexibility and adaptability. In this way, they build up their skill set, moving from the simulated learning environment to a real professional work environment – a process that significantly prevents inert knowledge (knowledge that can only be reproduced) and facilitates the acquisition of knowledge that can subsequently be applied (Renkl et al., 1996).

Perhaps the active learning factor is the most critical reason for implementing the tool “student-made video podcast” as a modern form of project-based cooperative learning and experiential learning. At its essence, a range of learning strategies are used to ensure a transition between the basic cognitive processes – construction, memorization, and acquisition – that accompany the successful construction of knowledge and the activation of higher-order thinking instead of mere retention in memory. The emphasis in active learning is to put learners in situations where they must use and repeat the acquired basic concepts of the subject area to learn to recognize its essential aspects and to develop the ability to respond and react to challenges appropriately by finding relevant strategies (Kosslyn, 2017). Learner-generated digital video successfully aligns with views of active learning – it supports and stabilizes substantive understanding of the learning material, not just at face value; contributes to the expansion of the learner’s capacity to evaluate the big picture and the meaningful set of knowledge and skills, and their relevance in real life; provides a better framework for multisensory learning experiences; emphasizes creativity, (self) observation, and interaction; engages attention and empowers learners to shape their own learning experience; activates both critical and divergent thinking (Meylan, Ret. in 2023).

## PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

Ten students from the “Music Media Technologies and Audio Engineering” university degree from Sofia University “Kliment Ohridski”, divided into two groups, participated in the study. The two groups did not work in parallel but in sequence, i.e., they were not placed in competitive mode. Each group is tasked with the production of five episodes of a video podcast with an audiovisual theme, where the topics and guests are related to the specific narrow professional focus. At this stage of their studies, students have acquired all the necessary general theoretical knowledge and most practical skills in other degree courses. They practice them in the discipline of “Video podcast and vlogging technologies” and integrate them through the performance of a comprehensive, structural activity related to creating an audiovisual product.

In the beginning, in the pre-production phase, the trainees had to come up with the overall look of the video podcast – its topic; the target audience; its name; its graphic identity; its social media presence; assigning roles to learners, according to their comfort zone, aptitudes and potential; setting the technical parameters related to the technical implementation; building an adequate environment (*mise-en-scene*) in which to film. Next came the preparation of the content. Once they decided on the narrow professional focus of the podcast – the audiovisual field, the students had to come up with the content of the different episodes. That includes considering the experts to invite; research related to them; coming up with the questions and direction of the conversation to follow; and organizing the shooting process.

Group/course one created a video podcast called “Audio Joint”, and group/course two called it “Studio4Live”. In five episodes of each videocast, guests were leading specialists in the field of audio engineering in Bulgaria. Students were provided professional video cameras, lenses, microphones, a camera, mic stands, and a recording workstation to use while completing the assignment. To feel more at ease in front of the cameras, the students decided to present their projects in pairs. The rest of the students formed the technical team – director, camera operators, sound director, and editor, and applied their skills in the filming step of the production stage.

At the post-production stage, both groups preferred a workflow approach in which each student edits one episode – makes coloristic, applies graphics, processes sound, and exports the finished product. In this way, the benefits to the learner are maximized as each faces the different challenges inherent in each step of video editing.

The episodes were shared on the YouTube channel of the Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies of Sofia University and distributed freely in the social internet space, causing high interest among the social circle and audience interested in the subject area.

After completing the course, students completed a survey. They shared their free-text answers to three main questions: 1) From your experience creating a video podcast, what are the positive aspects of the process? 2) From your experience of creating a video podcast, what do you rate as negative and difficult moments of the process? 3) Do you think that, in general, the video podcast created by students can be a good tool for mastering different valuable skills related to the different stages of creating an audiovisual product? If yes, why? What skills? If not, why?

Students were not informed in advance that their opinions would be analyzed, to generate spontaneous articulation of their observations and learning experiences.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The benefits of learner-generated video production are indisputable, and the method has already been proven globally to provide a safe and effective learning environment for meaningful learning. Therefore, the main question this research aims to answer is how the students themselves evaluate their experience in this empirical context and whether it helps their subsequent professional operation. The analysis of the content of the written responses identified three positive markers related to the video podcast format itself: social interaction, developing communication and practical technical skills, and developing a sense of self-worth. On the negative side, one indicator was formed: time-consuming and effort.

### A. POSITIVE FINDINGS

#### *Marker 1. Social interaction*

The meeting with interesting and proven professionals from the audiovisual field was a positive finding for all respondents. In this, the trainees see a valuable opportunity to exchange experience, enriching themselves and the viewers.

Collaboration is the next positive aspect mentioned, according to its frequency of presence in the surveys. R.S. shares: "It was fun to get together as a group and do a common project together that somehow brought us together and united us." S.D. shares: "It was even more fun filming the podcasts now that my university colleagues were also involved. During the training period, we became quite close with some of them, and I dare say that they are my new friends, and I enjoyed working together."

The nature of the teamwork that creating a videocast requires, and the making of a specific type of technical error in the first issue of the podcast series led to the self-aware need for motivation and responsibility of every single student in every single role and stage of creation. The mistakes made

in the first episode were not multiplied in the subsequent repetitions. The repeatability of the process (the creation of several episodes) created a clear algorithm of action. That became a prerequisite for improving and consolidating the technology by which the product is professionally created, and the trainees felt the usefulness of the newly acquired knowledge and skills tested in real settings.

Students stated that creating the podcast was challenging because the requirements were to create a professional-level product, which provoked more seriousness towards the task, and more investment of time and thought. V.S. shares that the effort is much greater when a quality end product is expected but understands that it is worth it because “given the huge marsh of the poor-quality end product in the form of any kind of podcast in the online space, there being trained staff, who knows what and how to do it, would raise the level a lot from where it is at the moment”. This solid preparation for future real work in a media environment gives added value to the assignment as learners gain authentic experience that will contribute to effective outcomes in the future.

#### *Marker 2. Developing communication and practical technical skills*

All responses emphasize the importance of learning in an authentic atmosphere and the practical development of new skills. They expressed satisfaction with the opportunity to learn something new, develop, and gain experience through this project.

Working in the podcast format is described as a means of personal development and improvement of various skills, including building communication skills, which are highly useful in all aspects of life. The opportunity for students to experience different roles in podcasting as hosts and as part of the technical team allowed them to understand the process from both sides of the camera. Regarding the static nature, from a technical point of view, of videocast creation, where there are established steps to be followed, there is a relaxed, controlled environment as filming takes place inside. There are no distracting visual or audio elements to divert students' attention during the linear process of audiovisual recording, which is compensated by the dynamics that accompany the function of the host of the vodcast. K.N. shares: “The podcast hosts quite often improvised questions on the spot and could be said to have played the main parts, apart from the interviewees, because of their quick reactions, changing questions, continuing or changing the direction of the conversations in the appropriate way and at the right time.” That is, each student's appearance in different roles has positively influenced the in-depth understanding of the process and the development of a wide range of skills and knowledge.

The technical competencies traditionally associated with creating a television journalistic program (as the videocast is as well, according to its

creation process) and in which the students make noticeable progress are microphone placement, sound recording, camera work, video editing, and sound and video processing.

### *Marker 3. Developing a sense of self-worth*

The popularity of the videocast these days and its relative freedom of presenting the information makes it a very relevant format to the learners. They are aware that it is an up-to-date media tool to present their topics authentically, and they have gone out of their way to make the podcast sound unique, contemporary, and impeccable in a way that will attract an audience.

The students did not indicate having gone through any strongly negative moments during the making of the episodes. Instead, they shared difficulties of a different nature (technical, unpreparedness of the content related to the specific guest, the lack of more theoretical preparation, the lack of motivation of some of the students), which, however, accepted more as a challenge and as H.S. states: "There are no difficult moments, there are only new and unknown techniques and skills that are mastered over time."

For psychological reasons, the most challenging position was being a podcast host in front of the camera. However, with repeated practice, permanent changes in behavior were achieved due to the direct experience, which the students equated with developing confidence in front of a camera.

In general, the students found that all the effort they put into the videocast was in a positive direction. As S.D. says: "You have the opportunity to make something worthwhile and watchable, regardless of whether it is for educational purposes."

The assignment also created value that extended beyond learning outcomes. Students were enthusiastic about sharing online. Uploaded to the official YouTube channel of the Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies, the episodes were shared by the students in their profiles and resonated with the audience interested in the subject.

An interesting phenomenon was that all groups/courses of learners wished to keep the name they came up with for their video podcasts, with the request that they wish to continue them in the future, outside of the learning context. This initially, with the first course that created a videocast, caused surprise and was met with a lot of faculty resistance (the original idea of the podcast was to have an established name to be used in years to come by future students). However, the subsequent iteration of the problem with the second and the third course made us rethink the situation. Ultimately, we found that the "conflict" that arose on this occasion should be given a more positive interpretation, as it proves the degree of emotional attachment of the learners – they associate the videocast with something valuable and of their own.

## B. NEGATIVE FINDINGS

### *Marker 4. Time and effort*

From the teaching point of view, individual psychological factors were found in some students, which referred to a more dismissive attitude towards the learning process. A lack of enthusiasm was noted in personalities with a predisposition to a low degree of motivation, and they indicated as a negative side the time and effort that the task required. However, with a little more effort on the part of the teacher, they were able to fulfill the learning objectives, and the task turned out to be productive for them as well.

One student points out that given the large investment of time and labor, he expected a more significant social response.

The negative sentiments are moderate, with five out of a total of ten respondents indicating various aspects of the process that made it difficult for them or associated them with a negative moment – difficulties in preparing the cameras for shooting, gaps in the theoretical subject preparation, the lack of adequate preparation of the hosts in terms of the guest expert in some of the episodes, which could compromise the quality of the final product, the lack of enough people to form the team, the disappearance of the creative and production progress after the third, fourth recording.

## DISCUSSION

Analyzing the learners' responses validates the initially assumed high value of the constructive tool for the learning process – video production generated by the learners in the specifics of a video podcast. Their attitude towards the creative process of its creation is highly positive, and the highly professional finished product shared on social networks indicates that the learners have acquired and consolidated a set of transferable skills that would be useful not only in professional development but also in most fields of life.

The group consists of a small number of students (four in the first group and six in the second group); thus, active learning is easily possible. Working in a team instills responsibility in students and provokes activity since the final overall result depends on the individual attitude and effort that each participant puts into the production process. That refers to the characteristics of project-based learning – collaboration, and engagement (Stanley, Zhang, 2018; Blacer-Bacolod, 2022).

By its very nature, practice builds lasting habits, and developing the podcast over several episodes creates a repeatability of key steps in the workflow, through which learners gain critical reflection, learn the right “lessons” from their own mistakes, and see their progress with each subsequent episode – their self-confidence is strengthened, their professional attitude towards the activity is cultivated, they automatically apply the set of acquired

knowledge and skills, and they find rationally the right strategies when solving problems that arise.

We were able to confirm the thesis of the value of the student-generated video projects as a constructive learning task that promotes student engagement and autonomy, creates a strong sense of ownership, self-regulation, and personal interest in the topics, and the achievement of outcomes related to new literacy skills (Kearney, Schuck, 2006; Kearney, 2011).

Some students reported that the main difficulty they experienced was standing in front of the camera, but eventually, they were able to transform their anxiety and keep a calm demeanor as hosts.

The learner-generated videocast brought features to the learning process that favored achieving meaningful learning, particularly the mastery of domain-specific knowledge and skills and their subsequent transfer into a professionally finished product (Hakkarainen, 2011). The fact that we placed the creation of a video podcast in the context of not just simulating a professional situation but a real one contributed to forming an applicability-centered disposition in students with a long-term effect.

Armed with the fundamentals and key aspects of the audiovisual field they are studying, students applied them in the context of creating a video podcast and effectively acquired and strengthened combinations of a range of abilities of a technical and creative nature. The more specific of them are:

- An in-depth understanding of each stage of the process of creating a video artifact – from exploration to finalization;
- Successfully guiding the creative, technical, organizational, communication, and promotion aspects of video production;
- Shared interest and respect for the common work and each one of the team (collaboration);
- Recognizing the roles and responsibilities of the professional positions of director, cameraman, lighting, presenter, sound engineer, editor, and producer.

Creating a video production develops more global skills: research, analytical, problem-solving, and planning skills (Theodosakis, 2002), soft skills, skills for constructing meaningful communication in a digital social environment, and critical thinking skills.

Creating five episodes of each podcast resulted in the automation of the activity, which psychologically means that subsequent real-life tasks of a similar nature should be performed with “less expenditure of ‘energy’ and in less time” (Stoykov, 2001: 94) and a significant degree of confidence in one’s abilities. The iterative approach to implementing the task favors the formation of permanently fixed intellectual habits. We are strongly convinced that after passing this course, students gain clarity regarding the methodology of

action in creating the same or similar audiovisual product, can successfully use the accumulated knowledge and skills, and manage specific theoretical and practical processes in professional media environments.

In summary, students' experience with video casting shows that:

- Their work has been a valuable experience that requires a variety of technical, creative, and social skills, a willingness to accept different challenges;
- In the process of creation, they became familiar with the specifics of teamwork and appreciated the importance of cooperation and responsibility;
- The task was an important tool for training and personal development, which enriches not only the participants but also society;
- The format allows them to express their creativity, meet new established people, and create connections in the specific professional field;
- Vodcast projects provide solid preparation for working in a media environment.

## CONCLUSION

The videocast (created by the learners) has emerged as a suitable modern way to create an unobtrusive form of internet presence that holds a stable role among a specific community of close interest. As a pedagogical phenomenon, it is defined as a process of direct experiential learning, building on systematic academic knowledge, which has the potential to transform learning into reliable, consistent knowledge (Kolb, 2014). Its project-based qualities formulate a significant academic environment that positively affects the process of acquiring knowledge by integrating meaningful learning characteristics – activity, constructiveness, authenticity, cooperativeness, and contextuality.

The lasting conclusion that has emerged is that the student-made video podcast, as a specific form of digital storytelling, quite reasonably becomes part of the teaching approaches of work, giving relevance, significance, and high applicability to the educational content ('[Anonymous, 2020]'). Defining and developing a modern learning environment is about establishing a meaningful use of digital technologies, bringing different learning styles closer to each other, generating interest, attention, and motivation, developing the creative talent of learners, and maintaining an authentic, student-centered pedagogy (Blomberg et al., 2013).

The video podcast – on the one hand, as a pedagogically designed guideline and situational strategy, and on the other, as a creative tool for self-expression – predisposes learners to assemble ideas, concepts and skills themselves, making it a well-chosen method that is in sync with already established rational arguments for using learner-generated video

– it creates an authentic learning experience (Newmann, 1996; Radinsky et al., 1998; Ludewig, 2001; Reeves, Herrington, Oliver, 2002; Kearney, Schuck, 2006; Reeves, Caglayan, Torr, 2017); it provokes active learning (Shewbridge, Berge, 2004; Bijmens et al., 2004; Kosslyn, 2017); it improves understanding of the subject matter (Gross, 1998; Ross, Yerrick, Molebash, 2003; Schuck, Kearney, 2004; Blacer-Bacold, 2022); it enhances motivation and provides positive emotions (Hung et al. 2004; Hakkarainen, 2007, 2009; Pirhonen, Rasi, 2017); it provides meaningful learning (Jonassed et al., 1999; Hakkarainen, Saarelainen, Ruokamo, 2007; Hakkarainen, 2011); it develops collaborative skills (Ludewig, 2001; Reid, Burn, Parker, 2022); it builds a number of literacies, including media, technological, visual, communication (Burn et al., 2001; Yildiz, 2003; Shewbridge, Berge, 2004; Kaperonis, 2021).

The video podcast, with the relevant conditions that we introduced in the discipline “Video podcast and vlogging technologies”, was able to engage and arouse the interest of learners, form a context for a personalized learning experience and a quality of learning that contributed to the exteriorization of the cognitive experience in a valuable visual product with socio-cultural significance.

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