

Television Production at Bournemouth Media School

The Situation

This video case study is part of a three year consortium project that is looking at Group Work Assessment in Media Production. Six higher education institutions have been involved in recording their method of assessing student groups involved in different areas of media production.

[Music sting]

Paul Inman: In the second year of the Television Production course we assess a number of things, the artefacts, the four single camera pieces and the two 'as live' studio pieces that they produce, but we also look at their group process work and to do that we have a system of peer group assessment. On top of that as well we also look at how an individual feels that the whole process has worked and we ask them to do a production analysis.

Student (a): The most important part of doing this unit I think would be sort of trial and error, so you're prepared for the third year when you actually... what you do counts. So I feel personally it doesn't really matter what mark you get, it's better to choose something really adventurous and then you can learn... make the mistakes and learn from those rather than doing something safe where you know you'll get a good, like an ok mark, but I think it's better to do something adventurous and get it wrong now, so then you can learn later.

Paul Inman: Only work in the final year counts towards their degree classification, so the whole group process work must be sorted out in those first and second years.

[Music sting]

Paul Inman: An example of one of the pieces of single camera work that the group will do in the first term of the second year is the independent drama project.

Student: Bob walks into his kitchen, or Bob is in his kitchen... [discussion] great... and he looks around at the mess, we get a nice few shots of the crap in the kitchen and then he decides he needs something to eat, opens all the cupboards, which are going to need to be emptied out... he just opens the cupboards, finds the cupboards empty and then we just see him kind of ponder what he's going to do next and that is it. It's very simple... it's so easy...

Paul Inman: We do take quite a 'hands on' approach as to who will work with who and what we do is look at their record of work in the first year and then we put people together, mainly in a positive way, hopefully to present them with challenges for the coming year.

Student (b): Something I don't like is the way we're put in the same group all year, I find that extremely irritating actually. You know, not that I... I get on with everyone in my group fairly well but I'd still like to... it'd be better I think if we mixed round more because I think we do get stuck in the same group all year, it can be a bit frustrating, and there's people who weren't in my group in the first year who I'd like to work with and I haven't got to work with them yet and then I'd feel like when I get up to doing my minor and my major, should I work with these people that I really wanted to work with, or should I not because I haven't worked with them yet and I don't know whether they're any good or not.

Paul Inman: The idea of who does what on student production work, now I think the decision making about that is something that I think is totally the domain of students, it's not something that we should be telling what to do. I have images of kind of junior school, infant school playgrounds where you're told to join the line and you can do this and you can do that, and that's not what university education is all about, so we should be encouraging them... encourage them to make their own decisions.

Student (a): In this drama that we're doing at the moment, I am lighting. I'm not really that interested in lighting but I feel like... I'm specialising in sound and I feel that maybe although I'm not interested in lighting I should do it so I can understand what's required of a lighting person so when it comes to me directing I won't say 'do this, do that' and it's impossible and it's important to understand what each role has to go through so then you're not asking people to do impossible things when you come to direct.

Paul Inman: There is an issue of how much we tutor or we guide their work in the second year of the course. I have to say that in the first year there is much more direct involvement by technical staff and academic staff in the comings and goings of their production work. In the second year there's far less of that, but we are trying to think of the arc of the course and that in the final year they have to work on their own, in groups which they've decided amongst themselves, on work which is an open brief, so everything is moving to them going out the door after three years and being able to work professionally, so as you look at the students in the second year of the course, they are in a transition period.

[Music sting]

Student: Three, two, one... action.

Paul Inman: The work that they do in their second year, they do two studio projects and one of the first ones they do is a piece of collaborative work with the scriptwriting students. [Actuality in background]. We're obviously encouraging students to make notes and not keep diaries about the other people, that's not what it's about, but keeping notes as the process continues, because we're talking about a two term period here and I have to say like a lot of student work obviously they'll be doing that right at the end undoubtedly, right at the end they try and make sense of the two terms. Now in terms of reflecting on two terms' work, that's ok, but obviously it makes sense if you've made some notes about the kind of... the detail that happened on those productions.

Student (c): I've been keeping a log of all the shoots we've done, just so I know what happened on the days and who helped out.

Student (d): I haven't been keeping a log or diary. No, I can pretty much remember how I think people have done.

Student (a): I think it's easy to remember because if someone did nothing you remember that, and if someone worked really hard you remember that. It's usually if someone just did what they thought was required of them to the bare minimum, then you're like oh they did it, but they didn't do it very well but then that's what was required of them and it's hard to mark them but I think you remember what people did.

Student (c): With my drama, I directed it, so I knew exactly how much people were involved, I knew exactly what they'd done to help me, whereas with say this studio thing we're doing today, I'm taking more of a back seat for this one, to allow other people to take more kind of main roles, so I haven't really been involved with the whole production process so I'm not quite sure exactly what people have been doing.

Student (b): A problem I have with peer assessment is that it can be quite personal. Usually lecturers and people at university, they mark our projects on the final project, depending on how good it is, but peer assessment I think people mark on how well they get on with that person, you know, and I think there can be a lot of personal issues with people, perhaps someone was just having a bad time in their life or something and they're not very talkative or they, you know, they're quite stressed out or something, and people can mark them down for that.

Student (e): Some people are marking on a scale from 1 to 100, others stick within like 50 and 70 'cause that's your two-two and your first, that kind of thing, and you need like clear guidelines and so, so and so came to this meeting or that meeting, or they did this role and therefore they get that amount of marks. It's far too broad, you don't know how or where to mark them.

Student (b): If people put in the effort then they will do well and the group will see that and then they'll get a good mark, so it's all fifty/fifty either way... there's good things and there's bad things about it. Over all I think it's... in principle it's good that we get to mark each other though.

[Music sting]

Paul Inman: [Actuality background sound] Later on in the academic year, the same students are obviously going to then undertake another piece of studio work, this time an interactive programme.

Paul Inman: With the peer group assessment there is obviously moderation of those marks that the students hand in. I mean you could argue that there is moderation because everybody is marking everybody else and so it's quite a matrix of marks that you're having to deal with statistically at the end and I think you can look at those and you can make assumptions, because they are really assumptions. They are assumptions of what has happened within the group. Somebody gets a very low mark and it's given to them by a number of people, it may say a number of things. It may be that person wasn't around, wasn't really pulling their weight, but it also might mean they were and they just didn't get on with the other people, so... I think for me there are obvious things that come up from the statistical analysis, from the marks, but then there are other things that need to be moderated by a tutorial with the leader of that unit and the students, to talk through actually what happened. I think what's interesting though is that that kind of tutorial approach is happening throughout the two terms, so it's not something we just do at the end. The only kind of form of arbitration would be right at the end where things don't seem to tally up.

Student (c): I don't think there is a way around it really, I don't think there's a way that they could say objectively, you can't give good marks to some people and you can't give bad marks to other people, it's all... peer assessment is a completely personal thing, it's your views and some people have different views from others. You can't do anything about it but it's very difficult 'cause you're not quite sure how people are going to mark and there's no way you can say, you know, you can't do it that way.

Paul Inman: If you're going to give peer group assessment a go then it's about peer assessment, it's not about us not agreeing with the way peers have marked a student, so I mean I'd feel a bit uncomfortable about then coming in and changing the mark because one student who say received a very low mark wasn't happy with it, so what we need to do is just talk to the students about why that is and I'm not averse to the idea of then opening that up to a whole group and any students that have been taught by me at Bournemouth I'm sure would understand what I'm saying here, that I would actually encourage that in an open group, because it's all about... in the end working with people is all about being able to be open and be honest and I think that's something that we work very hard at here.

[Music sting]

Paul Inman: None of these marks in the first two years of the course are going to go towards that student's degree classification. I am adamant about that. I don't think peer group assessment should be used to decide the final mark of a degree student. So what it is, is assessment, formative assessment over those first two years to learn core skills, and one of those core skills is about working with other people.

Student (a): I think it's important to learn to work in a group, 'cause when you go into the industry that's what it's going to be, and it's also important I feel to learn to be a director and then also be a runner, so you can learn how to deal with levels or responsibility and being told what to do as well, because when you go into the industry you're going to be a

runner and you're going to be told to do the lower jobs, so I think it's important that you get to know how to deal with all those levels of responsibility and that's part of the group.

Paul Inman: Each student is looking at the other members in their group and attributing a mark to each of the students, which is reflecting their performance within the group. Having done a number of roles, remember, everybody's doing a number of roles.

Student (e): I think peer assessment is used because you don't get to see... the tutors don't get to see what other people are doing, they're not here all the time, they don't know what's going on, they don't know how people work together, so it's a good way of finding out what's going on basically. [Background actuality].

Paul Inman: I felt uncomfortable about the fact that we're never there. I don't mind not being there but I felt uncomfortable about the weighting of the assessment, and in fact in a number of exam boards we have the problems where in the second year of the course there's a grouping or marks, because it's not... those marks are not expressing the individualness of each of the students and so we've tried to do something about that. It's usually... the problems are students who don't like working with other people and in the television industry, as with most kind of working lives, that's not... that's a big problem and that's something we should be addressing while they're here with us.

[Music sting]

[End of programme].