

# **Teachers as producers, students as directors: why teachers use student-generated digital video in their classes.**

**Sandy Schuck and Matthew Kearney**  
**University of Technology, Sydney**  
Sandy.schuck@uts.edu.au

New developments with digital video and editing software have facilitated the use of student-generated video to enhance teaching and learning. The project discussed in this paper investigated the value of such use for enhancing pedagogy in K-12 schools. The collaborative project between academics from a NSW university and Apple Computer Australia identified, examined and analysed pedagogical practices in relation to use of this technology in five case schools. This paper will focus on the perspectives of the teachers in the study and their rationale for using student-generated digital video in their classrooms. It will also analyse important contextual factors in the schools which contributed to successful practices with digital video.

## **Introduction**

Over the last few years, digital video and editing software have become more accessible, easier to use, and more readily available to users of all ages. Some teachers have seized this opportunity to use a common and current technology in innovative ways to promote student learning, or to enhance their teaching. This paper describes a multiple case study of the use of 'student-generated digital video' (from now on abbreviated to 'DV') in five schools. Previous papers have outlined some general findings arising from this study, for example [1], and also some methodological issues arising in the study [2]. This paper will focus on the rationales that teachers had for using student-generated digital video in their classrooms and will also analyse the contextual features that encouraged such use.

This project was a collaboration between researchers from the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney and Apple Computer Australia. Five case studies provided details of activities, approaches, roles and beliefs of students and teachers in a range of K-12 schools using student-generated video; as well as identifying the characteristics of schools in which such use was prevalent. The findings are informing teachers and teacher education institutions about how pedagogy may be enhanced using digital video.

## **Research on student-generated digital video**

Searches of contemporary research literature revealed that extremely few studies have been conducted in Australia which focus either on the reasons that teachers have for promoting the use and production of digital video by students, or on the contexts of the schools in which such use occurs. One far-ranging study in UK schools has contributed much to our understanding of how digital video can be used to develop learning [3]. However, there are no studies of similar scope available in Australia.

While there are a number of studies that look at student-generated digital video in Australian universities [4], [5], few studies were found that probed teacher rationales for use of DV in K-12 Australian classrooms. Studies often describe interventions in which digital video is used and suggest benefits arising from the use of student-generated digital video, but there is little information on why teachers choose to use this technology in their classes. Further, while there are a number of studies that look at how the school context can encourage or inhibit the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in general, very little research is available on the school contextual factors influencing the use of DV. This paper will focus on teachers' rationales for using DV and the contextual factors supporting such use.

## **Teachers' rationales for using student-generated digital video**

The literature suggests that there are a number of reasons for use of student-generated digital video in teaching and learning. These reasons, elaborated below, include: development of a variety of literacies; provision of authentic learning experiences; enhancement of motivation and engagement; improvement of expression and communication; improvement in collaborative learning skills; and development of technological skills.

### **Building new literacies**

The potential for students' digital video production to support the development of emerging literacies, particularly media and visual literacies, is evident in a number of studies. Digital video production tasks require integration of aural, oral, textual, gestural, spatial and multimodal communications along with the language required to communicate about images, music and film [6]. Also, positive relationships exist between such DV projects and the development of critical viewing skills [7].

Yildiz [8] examined the importance of students developing media literacy skills for the purpose of preparing a new generation for a media-rich culture. She contends that, rather than just being technical or peripheral, studies of media must be central to the learning process to assist students in developing an understanding of media images and the ability to evaluate media as presented in our society. Yildiz reported on teachers in the act of creating digital video themselves and their recognition of the broad range of skills development through these projects. As they became producers of their own media projects, these teachers recognized that they were developing media literacy skills and becoming informed consumers and citizens of the world. Stager [9] also reported on the power of digital video to promote media literacy, particularly during the editing process where children can re-order events, add narration, dramatic music, transitions and special effects and think about ways in which the media can manipulate a message. Developing media literacy concepts of bias, point of view, propaganda and advertising can be achieved when students are behind the camera and involved in the editing process. These important skills help students to become more critical viewers and informed consumers of media [7].

Throughout the BECTA report, Reid et al. [3] stress that students' effective use of appropriate language relating to the 'moving image' resulted in higher quality learning and products. This extra control of appropriate language gave students a certain power of expression to enhance their use of the technology.

## **Creating authentic learning experiences**

There is evidence in the literature of the potential for digital video to promote authentic learning experiences for students. In these studies, students engage in real-world problems and situations [10], rather than abstract and hypothetical examples that can be difficult to put into practice. One such experience is through the use of digital video to create news and current affairs programs. Examples of such use can be seen in a range of studies from the primary grade level through to university student level. For example, Cameron investigated the use of DV in a journalism course [11].

Another form of authentic learning which can be experienced through the use of digital video is the possibility of filming and analysing real situations rather than simulations or models. A good example of this is Gross' motion analysis project with undergraduate students to develop their understanding of human movement [12]. Outcomes included the development of technologically-related skills, greater understanding of content and pleasure in publishing work for a public audience. Indeed, this final aspect makes this project even more interesting [12].

Ludewig also discussed the authenticity of creating for a real audience as his university students created short iMovies in the process of learning a second language [5]. They acknowledged the importance of having a 'physical product' at the end of this process which can be presented to a range of people for a range of useful purposes. As well, Anderson reported on students capturing scenes of school life as an orientation video for new students or modifying movie trailers to become an 8<sup>th</sup> grade farewell to be broadcast school-wide on the last day of school [13]. The importance of audience and of engaging in real-life examples is also highlighted in a paper arising from the current study [14].

## **Developing conceptual understanding**

The use of digital video technology to develop deep conceptual understandings is a further benefit raised in some of the literature. This is an important consideration when evaluating the effectiveness of this medium in a variety of discipline areas for student learning in Australian classrooms.

Ross, Yerrick and Molebash spent two years working with students, teachers, principals and parents investigating ways digital video production can enhance learning for primary-aged children [15]. They found that students' digital video work was invaluable in developing scientific skills such as observation, investigating variables, comparing trials and drawing conclusions based on this evidence. For example, one class was investigating the life-cycle of plants and using their digital cameras to closely observe and record changes over time. Students came to appreciate the importance of consistency in scientific exploration and, by the conclusion of the project, were able to accurately describe the life-cycle of plants and evaluate the accuracy of different research methods (e.g. hand drawn versus video-based records of plant growth). The study also indicated that often, in carrying out experiments, the excitement of the experiment (e.g. forces in physical science) reduced children's capacity for focusing on the data. However, their digital video footage allowed them

to analyse and graph the recorded data upon return to the classroom and even manipulate some variables to examine concepts of force [15].

The study in [3] agrees with the findings above, particularly that digital video technology helps pupils assimilate scientific concepts effectively and quickly. It is claimed that digital video is often the most appropriate medium for learning and embedding new subject knowledge and understanding and for reflecting on and reinforcing and extending that knowledge.

### **Enhancing motivation and other affective outcomes**

Increased motivation and engagement is one of the most heralded benefits of student-generated digital video tasks. For example, Burn et al. found Year 8 boys were keen to spend every lunchtime as well as several after-school sessions working on their digital video projects [16]. Their motivation appeared to stem from the sense of 'control' they had in these tasks, particularly in the editing phase. This sense of control also was found to be facilitated by the students' perceived independence from the classroom teacher. Similarly, Reid et al. found that students were likely to invest time outside lessons to work on their DV projects [3]. It was felt that student ownership of the product contributed to this and participating teachers reported enhanced self-esteem and self-perceptions in some students as a direct result. The digital video projects often enabled students to transform both their own identities and their views of the world – indeed, these outcomes may prove the most significant potential for digital video tasks.

Students themselves have reported one advantage of working with digital video is the ability to take risks and change their mind [16]. Specifically, the authors found the students experimented more when working in a group situation, and were willing to trial different ideas [16]. This is confirmed by Reid et al. who noted that students perceived one of the main advantages of producing their own digital videos was their freedom to reshape and revise their productions, allowing them to experiment and take risks in a confident manner [3].

### **Promoting expression and communication skills**

Another common claim from the literature is that student-generated digital video tasks can enhance students' written and other communication skills. For example, Banaszewski investigated the use of personal digital video stories amongst young children and found these projects to be instrumental in helping them find voice, confidence and structure in their writing [17]. Similarly, Reid et al. found that digital video production offered alternative avenues to students who were less able or reluctant to write about their work [3]. Indeed, the ubiquitous nature of today's digital technologies make them a tool which can 'level the field' for students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds [15] and can both compensate for difficulties (e.g. written expression) and allow strengths to be further developed.

### **Developing collaborative learning skills**

Almost all studies discussed to this point had students working in pairs or small groups to create their digital video products. Many reported on the positive benefits of

these peer learning environments in terms of developing key collaborative and communicative skills, appropriate language development and effective teamwork skills such as negotiation and reaching a consensus. These benefits are raised by researchers and classroom teachers throughout the literature as one of the most important outcomes of the digital video production process. For example, Ludewig found his tertiary students' peer learning environment was socially challenging and demanded collaboration [5]. In this study, a shift in these university students' intellectual development was evident as they learn to articulate their point of view and listen to the views of others. Furthermore, they found that grouping students according to ability (i.e. one student with greater content knowledge and the other with technical skills) was appropriate in allowing each student to shine in their stronger role. Indeed, Reid et al. found that while the use of digital video was initially seen by teachers as having particular benefits for students' technological skill development, they eventually prioritised the potential development of students' social skills, communication skills, teamwork and decision-making skills [3].

### **Building generic learning skills**

Throughout the literature a range of generic learning skills is identified as being developed during the digital video experience. In addition to those discussed above, such as communication and collaboration, Reid et al. identified other generic skills reported by teachers, including problem-solving skills, project management and organisational skills, planning skills, as well as thinking, reasoning and risk-taking skills [3]. A more comprehensive overview of potential generic skills learned during digital video activity is presented by Theodosakis, who discussed the visioning skills, research skills, problem-solving skills, planning skills and analytical skills necessary to create digital video [18].

In summary, the above literature indicates that there are benefits in using DV in class. However, unless teachers are convinced of these benefits, they are unlikely to use this technology in their classes. Therefore it becomes essential to investigate teachers' rationales for such use, both to see if these rationales align with the empirical findings above, and to be able to present a convincing case for such use from the perspective of classroom teachers. This paper will report on teacher rationales that arose in our case study of five schools.

In the area of school influence on the use of DV, there is some literature on how the school context influences take-up of ICT by teachers and students. While not specifically looking at the use of digital video, research indicates that integration of ICT into classroom lessons is enhanced by whole school involvement, principal support, common technology goals being held by staff, ease of access, and collaborative professional development [19], [20], [21]. It was of interest in our research project to see if these contextual factors were relevant for the use of digital video as well.

### **Students in the director's seat**

There were three related foci for this study that make it different from many previous studies in this field. Firstly, it examined pedagogy rather than the technology per se; secondly, it focused on student-created video rather than pre-made professional video

productions; and finally, it focused on the process of generating the video rather than giving undue attention to the quality of the actual product.

The research questions included:

- What are teachers' rationales for using student-generated digital video in their classes?
- What is the role of the school in promoting innovative use of the technology? What other contextual factors constrain or enhance the use of this technology in teaching and learning?
- What is the nature of the learning outcomes in student-generated digital video use in various Key Learning Areas?
- What pedagogical approaches are being used with this new technology?

Our project investigated these questions in five case study schools. Schools were identified through their connections with Apple Computer Australia. Apple staff were able to nominate those schools in which use of student-generated digital video was occurring in classrooms in a substantive way. There were three secondary schools and two primary schools. Two of the secondary schools were Catholic schools, the other a NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) school. Both primary schools were state schools, one in NSW and one in Victoria. The authors had asked Apple to recommend a set of schools that were using digital video across a range of subject areas. They also indicated that they wished to look across K-12 classes. In this way, they were able to look at trends and themes that were common, not to a particular subject area, but rather concerning the way that digital video was used.

The project involved visits to the five case study schools which ranged in duration from two to five days. Two researchers would participate in each visit, and data were collected by means of questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews with executive staff, participating teachers and other key staff, and focus groups with students. After study of each school site was complete, its case would be written, following a proforma which reflected the research questions. The five cases were then analysed collectively to identify themes as well as noteworthy occurrences that might have been unique to one school but added to our understandings of the use of student-generated digital video. Finally, a report, *Students in the Director's Seat: Teaching and learning across the school curriculum with student-generated digital video* [22], was written incorporating these results.

## **Why teachers used student-generated digital video**

Teachers gave a range of reasons for using digital video in their classes. Some of these were:

- To develop understanding
- To increase student autonomy
- To promote active learning
- To promote opportunities for collaborative learning
- To develop technological and digital literacy
- To provide feedback and records for parents
- To fit with their preferred approaches for teaching.

Two themes emerged most strongly from the data. One theme was that many of the teachers started using digital video in their personal lives and then brought it into their classrooms because they could see its potential for achieving a number of student outcomes. The opportunities they had experienced themselves by “playing” with the technology seemed to be important precursors for their classroom use. They were self-regulated in their quest to keep informed of new developments and keep their skills up to date. Some teachers actually undertook formal learning in the area. They generally had an exploratory approach to their own learning in this field and they seemed to encourage a similar approach with their own students.

This interest is illustrated by the following examples: Ray, a secondary school IT teacher “fell in love” with DV and was initially doing projects for his family. He made a package to teach video-editing as part of his Master of Education in IT and this gave him ideas for his teaching, showed him the potential of this new technology, and was the seed of what he did with his students. Carole (English teacher) mentioned that the knowledge and experiences of ICT (particularly DV) had the following impact on her teaching: “I try to apply the same hands-on approach in my classroom as I learn with. Students need to learn from their mistakes and need time to master skills so I need to provide them with time and space to do so. Learning also needs to be purpose driven. I learn to use ICT for a purpose and so do students in my classes.”

Most teachers recognised that their learning in this field would be a constant, ongoing challenge. Paula (history teacher) described her own experiences of learning with DV as “forever a steep learning curve”, while Carole similarly described her learning experiences as “a climb up a very steep mountain that I never reach the top of.”

Jayne’s interest in DV also grew from playing with the technology. Jayne is a Kindergarten teacher, who is an enthusiastic user of ICT in her classroom, and initially started using the school’s digital stills camera to take photos of “anything interesting” relating to her students’ activities, and put them into PowerPoint presentations. The children loved viewing these and subsequently she got involved in using the school’s digital video camera for similar purposes. She would take photos and footage of anything that happened and play with it. The children expressed strong interest in her filming activities and this led to her allowing students to film and edit their morning news times.

The second strong theme that arose was that teachers used DV to motivate students. Almost every teacher expressed a strong belief in the motivational outcomes from student-generated DV projects. Bob (secondary school) expressed it succinctly: “Video [production] is very magical...” and Ray mentioned that DV work is “exciting and easy. It can turn kids on to computers and what they have to offer.” Paula gave a more elaborate explanation: “It excites and interests them and captures their imagination, absolutely and completely. And you have to bring them back to earth and say I want the story board first before you have the camera in your hands...” She believed that the real world focus of DV work was a main source of motivation and the quality of their final tasks was a pleasing by-product of this enhanced motivation.

Another strong belief of the teachers was that there was enhanced motivation for reluctant learners in this type of work. Mal (mathematics and science teacher) believed that group work, problem-solving and the roles involved in DV projects can

support children who struggle with a concept, and help children present their own ideas and explanations. He expressed a major concern for these types of learners and a strong desire to use DV tasks to “motivate kids and break down barriers”. Paula thought that DV work gave students with learning difficulties a chance to be on an equal footing as compared to academic subjects: “They become so much more confident in what they are doing. It doesn’t matter if they have a reading disability or learning difficulties – they are all equal.” Kirsty (ICT Coordinator) believed that DV work could be a way of getting reluctant students involved while Kate (year 3 teacher) expressed similar sentiments:

Doing DV seems to bring the quieter students out of shell sometimes. It is good to see children who are lacking in confidence or skills having something to offer. It also gives a positive way for children who might like to play the class clown – lets their personality come out, but not in a disruptive way. They are able to use this medium to be boisterous without being disruptive. It was hard to keep a lid on enthusiasm so that children did not get hyper. [From interview with Kate.]

Finally, Colin (year 4 teacher) mentioned that

Kids that normally struggle with reading or writing – this [DV work] gives them another avenue to succeed, where it does not involve a lot of reading or writing. So you see kids come out of their shell a bit more with these sorts of activities. [From Colin’s interview.]

A number of the teachers expressed a desire to explore new ways of teaching using contemporary tools they knew would appeal to students. Nancy (year 6 teacher) said that she wanted to use digital media and all new technologies “for new ideas, new things to do and new ways to do it. I don’t want to be doing textbooks on screens etc.” Helga (LOTE teacher) said her students were bored with tapes and textbooks and she initially got interested in DV because of her perceived need to make her lessons more interesting. She had originally seen examples of teachers’ work on Apple’s web site. Her subsequent use of DV was motivating for many, particularly in Year 7: “It makes the lessons more exciting.” She thought that the DV projects she has used gave students a strong purpose and a reason for studying a language and this was motivational. She has observed this extra motivation through students’ questions to her and their general ‘on-task’ behaviour and obvious enjoyment of the lesson. They asked her to let them have lessons with DV again, after they had experienced it the first time, and while she believed that initially there was a strong novelty factor, the students were genuinely interested in the use of film. Similarly, Carole mentioned that DV projects were “a way of engaging kids, getting them to use technology in a different way” while Colin immersed his students in DV work because it was “doing something new that was fun ... to get another view of a topic, looking at another area of the topic they were doing instead of doing written work or reading about it. The children love it.” Finally, Kate believed that DV work was motivating “rather than doing a poster or something. They are far more engaged in what they are doing.”

These findings suggest that offering teachers the opportunity to develop their own personal interests in their use of digital video is a productive way of awakening their interest in the area and of indicating the pedagogical benefits of this technology. The

time to play with the technology was also mentioned as an important factor. Finally, the study confirms other research which suggests that if teachers see benefits in their classroom for a new approach, tool or strategy, they are more inclined to incorporate it into their practice. The belief that students were more motivated when they used digital video and that it led to increased autonomy were important factors in encouraging the teachers to introduce student-generated digital video into their classrooms.

## **Characteristics of the schools in which student-generated digital video was produced**

The other important factor for encouraging use of student-generated digital video concerned the school culture and context. The contexts in this study shared a number of characteristics that were independent of whether the schools were primary or secondary schools.

### **Principal with vision**

A major characteristic of all the schools we visited was that the principal displayed great leadership in the area of teaching with technology, and initiated the processes that led to innovation in the school. In most cases, the principal was responsible for directing much-needed resources into this area, and was supportive of initiatives that staff members would suggest.

For example, principals allocated funds for full-time ICT support people, for upgrading the computer labs, or for professional development for staff. A number of principals were very supportive of any staff member who expressed interest in developing an innovation. They would ask teachers to justify the use of any new technology (especially if it involved financial support) in terms of the benefits it might provide for teaching and learning. If teachers presented a compelling argument the principal would try to resource their request.

Often, a climate of innovation existed in the school, engendered mainly by the principal's vision. The principal was often THE main driving force behind the school's innovative e-learning practices. It was clear to the research team that in each of the case study schools, great enthusiasm, drive and support was available from the principal. An important outcome of this interest by the principal was that resourcing was largely available for initiatives in the ICT area, provided that they could be seen to have a benefit for teaching and learning.

### **Key person driving and supporting use of student-generated DV in school**

In four of the schools, there were particular staff members who seemed to be responsible for generating interest, among both staff and students, in student-generated digital video and who were clearly supportive of others' work in this respect. These key people had all worked with digital video in personal or professional capacities, or had gained further academic qualifications in the area of educational technology.

## **Technical support person**

Four of the five case schools had excellent technical support and staff in these schools believed that this was an important factor in the school's innovative use of student-generated digital video and other learning technologies. However, there was one school in which there was no technical support and staff there seemed to manage without it. However, as Jayne (who taught at that school) told us, if the server stopped working or there were other technical difficulties, she would have to try to fix it herself, which certainly increased her workload. It can be seen that although technical support is desirable, it is not a necessary factor for innovation to occur. Indeed, Jayne's principal held a firm view that technical support is not a key factor in his school's innovative use of ICT. Rather, the emphasis is more on pedagogical support.

## **School culture**

The school culture in the five schools shared various characteristics which appeared to encourage innovation in those schools. Common to all schools were the following: a risk-taking culture; an expectation that staff would be innovative; an encouragement of achievement of technological and professional goals; a supportive and open staff and parent culture; and an effort by the executive to minimise the bureaucracy when resources were sought for an innovation. Each of these is discussed in further detail below:

### **Risk-taking culture**

Of note here is the mention made in most schools of the importance of encouraging a risk-taking attitude amongst staff to nurture innovation in the school. Bob suggested that at his school innovation occurred because "The staff is not conservative – it boils down to being risk-takers". This ethos came mainly from the previous two principals and also the IT department in the school. Helga confirmed this view and said that the school had a 'trial and error' approach to new initiatives: only half of the projects tried actually are successful. The approach is to 'have a go'. She felt that the school was very encouraging, and gave staff freedom to experiment.

The principal at the NSW primary school saw this sort of risk-taking as important. He noted that he would like to see more staff trying new things, challenging themselves with new technologies in their teaching, "playing with the technology and being adventurous!"

In contrast, the principal at one of the Catholic secondary schools saw the need for teachers to overcome their fear of new technologies and encouraged this by seeing that each staff member had a laptop. Finally, at the state high school, the fact that the principal agreed that the school participate in numerous cutting-edge projects, appeared to generate a risk-taking culture in the school.

### **Expectation that staff would use ICT in their teaching**

At all case study schools, there seemed to be a clear expectation that all staff would be technologically literate and would use ICT in their teaching. At a couple of schools there was an expectation that staff would use ICT in their non-teaching activities, and increasingly this was becoming unavoidable. For example, student reports, staff communication, timetables and class lists all required ICT skills. This expectation then 'spilled over' into the classroom use of ICT. Although this expectation regarded the use of ICT in general, it seemed to the research team that such an expectation was

a catalyst to further developments in more specific areas such as student-generated digital video.

### **Goal setting**

The Victorian primary school was a good example of a school in which clear goal setting was obvious. Staff and students are empowered to set their own initiatives. The principal initiated a *Professional Recognition Program (PRP)* for staff and students also set and monitored their own goals. The PRP operated on an annual basis at the school and staff were required to set three goals annually for themselves. One was a professional goal, one a personal goal and one a technological goal. One staff member had the role of mentor or professional development officer for the staff. She met with them and supported their efforts to attain the goals. With the technological goal, staff were also encouraged to ask staff members who had achieved that goal previously, to act as mentors for them. This process definitely contributed to initiatives involving the use of student-generated digital video in the school. It also demonstrated the importance of ICT in the school culture. Colin (Melbourne PS) commented on the process:

You have to be able to make your goal realistic to reduce stress. No-one really feels any pressure. It is just a matter of thinking what do I want to do this year and discuss it with [the school PD officer]. She does this with all the staff on a one to one basis. [The principal] has meetings at the end of year – what they [staff] have done, their goals, his view of how they have done in the year. [The PD officer] is at the start of the year. They have suggestions for goals but it is up to us.

The research team observed that staff took the setting and achievement of these goals very seriously and that this contributed to a culture in the school in which innovation was encouraged and then shared with colleagues. Staff members became expert in a particular field and then acted as mentor to others in this area.

### **Supportive and open staff and parent culture**

The schools in the project all seemed to enjoy a school culture that was supportive of new initiatives and that had an interested and supportive parent body. Jayne mentioned this feature at her school: interest in student-generated digital video came from staff themselves and this was sustained by collegial networking and support. The principal encouraged staff to share expertise and this was certainly evident in the school. An example was given by Jayne who said that she helped other teachers with DV. Support was informal, by 'word of mouth' and as the need / interest arose. The researchers felt that the principal had fostered an environment where there was a mostly informal but highly effective peer support system where staff support and inspire each other with new ideas and innovative use of ICT. There were some formal in-services but more often staff needs in this area were addressed as the interest arose.

Another feature of some of the schools was a supportive parent body who encouraged their children to use technology at home. The researchers were also very struck by the supportive community existing at all of the schools. There appeared to be an enthusiastic and innovative core group of teachers and excellent, ongoing PD opportunities.

### **Minimal ‘red tape’**

Our final finding in this regard concerned the ease with which innovations could be implemented. In general, there appeared to be fewer bureaucratic procedures in operation in these schools, than are usually apparent. This was thought to be a facilitating factor for the development of student-generated digital video. Principals appeared willing to spend money on appropriate resources with minimal paper work and ‘red tape’. The researchers observed that there seemed to be very few formal policies and this seemed to give rise to an impressive level of autonomy and self-regulation amongst the staff in regards to innovative e-learning practices.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

The findings from this project suggest a number of features are vital if student-centred, constructionist approaches are to occur in the use of digital video for learning. Firstly, teachers need to have some personal interest in digital video for their own purposes. They also need to believe that using it in class will be of benefit pedagogically, whether it be to engage students, develop student autonomy or enhance understanding.

The teachers in the study were passionate about the use of DV tasks in their classroom for numerous reasons. Most expressed a strong desire for independent co-learners in their classrooms and there was a strong perception that DV tasks supported this type of learning. Indeed, most teachers employed a ‘play’ approach to their own learning and perceived DV tasks as an opportunity for students to be similarly active and experiential in their learning. The teachers all felt that the use of student-generated digital video was highly motivating for students, particularly ‘reluctant learners’. There was a feeling that DV tasks used ‘current’ technology, thus making associated skills relevant for students, and products appealing and motivating.

Secondly, the context in which teachers work is central to their implementation of innovative approaches. It would appear that the principal is key here, both in primary and secondary schools. If the principal has vision, is a strong leader, encourages a risk-taking attitude for staff using ICT, and is able to allocate resources to staff for digital video use, the school climate is likely to be one that encourages such use. Collaborative staff and supportive parent bodies were also characteristic of our case study schools. The expectation of principal and staff that innovative technologies will be used appears to also be a driving force.

We have discussed the value of using student-generated digital video from the perspective of students in a previous paper [1]. This paper highlights teachers’ perspectives and the characteristics of schools adopting innovative practices using student-generated digital video projects.

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