

Teaching and Learning in the Documentary on Community: A Combination of Project Based Curriculum and USR Program

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Abstract

This program has entered eighth year since August 1, 2012 up till now. Through the concept of “participatory mode of documentary”, and “narrative communication”, this program leads the team of teachers and students to be integrated into the lives of local residents, and to using camera and interview recording their stories. It is to convey the perspective of the community through the USR program taking action. This program combines the two practical courses. Students start to learn early-stage field surveys, interviews, filming, shooting pictures, post-stage editing and sound mixing, copywriting visual design, writing interview editing, all art designs and curation. The results of teaching are 1. Cultivate the media professionals for local concern. 2. Spontaneous and active learning, facing problems, and solving problems. 3. The quality of the work is improved, and the touching moments continue. In the past, teaching was centered on teachers, but now it is student-centered; in the past, the focus was on the performance of works on learning, but now it is on the attitude and process of learning; in the past, it focused on lectures and textbooks, but now it focuses on teaching interactions generated by different situations and example sharing; in the past, the learning was more passive, but now it is converted to self-learning; in the past, students pursued personal creation, but now they know how to open up their minds to discuss social issues and care for the people of and the matters happening in the community.

1 Introduction to the program

This program is one of the sub-programs of the Metro Tamsui Memory of Cultural Creative

Heritage of the College of Liberal Arts, Tamkang University, and has entered its eighth year since August 1, 2012 up till now. This program combines the two courses of the “Audio & Video Project Planning” and the “Audio & Vide Project Production” for the junior in the Mass Communication Department. Through the professional knowledge and skills service-learning and the key research projects of the College of Liberal Arts, and combined with the curriculum and the USR program, this program carries out a nine-month action of producing the documentary on community each year. The origin of this program is to effectively preserve the existing culture, history, economy, education and industry of the Metro Tamsui, and to share many wonderful life stories and the beautiful cultural heritage of humanity on this land with more people. In the past, we, the teachers and students, completed the “Annals of the Respectable Elder” in 2013, the “Annals of Businesses and Cultural Centers” in 2014, the “Annals of Organic Farmers” in 2015, the “Annals of Anecdotes” in 2016, the “Annals of Shinning Creativity” in 2017, the “Annals of New inhabitants” in 2018 and the “Annals of Services Provided by Village Chiefs and the USR Program Teachers and Students” in 2019, a cumulative total of 54 documentary short films, seven interview series (including 54 reports on individuals). All the films and interview series are stored on the Tamsui portal website of “Tamsui Wiki” after the end of the results presentation in June each year for public viewing.

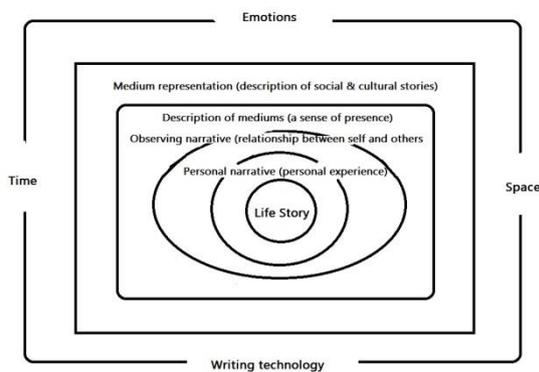
2 Ideas and methods

Through the concept of “participatory mode of documentary”, and “narrative communication”,

this program leads the team of teachers and students to be integrated into the lives of local residents, and to conduct a complete recording for the neighborhood residents in Tamsui and of the process of investing in the USR program by the teachers and students with the “community image” action. It is to convey the perspective of the community and the wonderful experiences co-created through the service-learning. The goal of this project is to accomplish the documentary film and interview series through early-stage field surveys, plan proposals, interviews, filming, and post-production, etc.

2.1 From “Community Communication” to “Narrative Communication”

In order to bring community communication into full play, it must be further combined with the expounding of “narrative communication” to better grasp the methods and techniques of communication. Tsang, Kuo-jen and Tsai, Yean once had the brilliant elaboration on “narrative communication”, pointing out that the content of “narrative communication” involves the self-report or the narrator' telling the life story, which aims to express emotions, arouse imagination, and enhance mutual listening to build up a sense of community, and further to experience life, understand the meaning of life and create a better life.



The initial proposal for the main elements of “narrative communication”

Therefore, the form of documentary film on community brings out the “life story” of the daily life of the principal community residents. Through the process of personal narrative of the photographed, observing narrative, media representation and image description with the

multi-distribution mechanism of the current “writing technology”, it conducts the effective preservation and dissemination of the community residents' personal vital issues and their collective memories by means of the film and internet.

2.2 The Participatory Mode

A way of representation of Taiwan's new documentary since the 1990s: from field surveys, long-term on-site observation, life documentary, care for the disadvantaged to the participatory mode so to speak up for the underprivileged or the rural people, unfolds the power of the citizen discourse. The documentary has become a tool for a cultural movement in society, thanks to the innovation and popularization of the technology that everybody can pick up a camera to display the power of telling his or her own stories. Many negative coverages of new immigrants seen in the media disclose extreme different discourse from the story of new female immigrants in our film. In the documentary series of the “Annals of New Immigrants”, we have seen many diligent, hard-working new immigrants full of ideals for the future; and the single-parent new female immigrants, facing marital setbacks but having to dry up their tears fighting for their survival at the same time. While they are actively seeking to find a foothold in their lives, they are willing to contribute their own abilities to assist the sisters who have just newly immigrated in. The mutual help between them is very touching. In contrast, our Taiwanese men seem to be the weak ones to be cared for by them.

Under the representation of *cinéma-vérité*, the voice of the new immigrant that has always been silent is spoken out. These documentaries based on narrative contexts of foreign spouses shorten our distance between the ethnic groups, and further remove the stereotypes or prejudices that once existed. Under the USR program, students walk out of their classroom and see a different world, which will deeply impact their perspectives and visions of the media work in the future.

2.3 From team management to curating

This curriculum combines two four-credit courses in the junior year. In each academic year, the teacher would look for the theme, the target and the cooperation unit to create a plan proposal for the review by the university. After being

approved, the university would provide the teacher with teaching hours deduction per credit, two administrative assistants and some subsidies. There are about 50 students taking the course, including Taiwanese students, exchange students, overseas Chinese students, etc. Each small group consists of 6 juniors and 1 senior providing assistance in the coaching. Students start the training from zero knowledge of documentaries, through theory to practice, early-stage field surveys, interviews, filming and production, stills shooting, post-stage editing and soundtracks, copywriting visual design, interview series editing, to the final curation; The 8 teams are required to complete a 12-minute documentary in a period of 7-8 months, a 3,000-word interview, 20 selected shots and stills, 20 photos of team work, and the production of an interview series by means of graphic design and typesetting. At the same time, students from each group needs to design posters, conduct curating with the coaching of the assistant, compose press releases, publicize, invite VIPs, hold a results presentation, and so on.

3 Learning results

3.1 Cultivate the media professionals for local concern

This is the study of the USR project, a whole set of complete process from the practical experience of the daily life to the design aimed for the media people. It is like a Cornerstone Course, helping students lay the foundation for further taking the Topstone Course of “Graduation Production and Performance” when entering into the senior year. It is for them to get to know how to build up the professional foundation before then, and at the same time to generate self-confidence, recognizing the importance of knowing how to concern for social issues and contribute one’s effort to serve the society as a media citizen.

This course adopts the PBL teaching concept to dispatch students to the community with their cameras to get to know this familiar yet somehow unfamiliar land. In addition to cultivating their professional literacy and adaptability, what is more important is to nurture their humanistic literacy and humanistic care. Going out to listen

to more stories of people who have different cultural backgrounds from themselves, and building up friendships as well as getting to know how to help others in need at the same time. The on-site training of walking out of the classroom helps to develop students' sense of responsibility with spontaneous and active attitudes. At the results presentation, when we see that the new immigrant mothers could become the focus of the narrative on stage, being honored and affirmed of their contribution on this land, we are all greatly moved and encouraged.

In the classroom seven years ago, students liked to create their own stuff and film their own small world, but in lack of valuable content, worthiness of reading and completeness. Now through this reversing course, each of them has the good courage to step out and find stories and entry points for other people's lives. The team needs to go through many visits for shooting and discussion and then to decide on the direction of the film; They also need to break through the bottleneck, open up the mind of the people, bring close the distance of the people, establish a good mode of communication and cooperation, and further achieve the deep learning and knowledge sharing. Throughout these years of work logs and reflections, we can see the changes in the students by walking out of the campus.

3.2 Spontaneous and active learning, facing problems, and solving problems

Under this multilateral interaction, students learn how to revitalize their thinking and understand how to face problems and solve problems. For example, if the photographed has an active boy who keeps on making noises, how can the team control the scene? They began to arrange a team member to serve as a big brother, taking the child out to play for soothing his emotion. Another example: If the photographed is not willing to let the camera enter their house, worrying about her Taiwanese husband and mother-in-law seeing the intervention of outsiders, what should they do? Students need to invest more time in gaining the trust of the counter party and good foundation of friendship, and they need to have more patience and love to touch them in order to have the opportunity to enter their house. Any problems can occur at the shooting scene, and they need to try out different

ways and learn to adopt different strategies to solve the problem. Students are more active in facing difficulties and take the learning seriously.

3.3 The quality of the work is improved, and the touching moments continue

In order to achieve even better results, students regard all learning as works that need to be exposed in new media and openly collected; they constantly invest a lot of energy and time in perfecting or modifying their work to reach a certain level. The efforts of the students during this period have already far exceeded the basic requirements of 4 credits. Therefore, students walk into the community, become active learners, and become independent learners; and they also learn how to integrate knowledge and experience and input their own emotions, which is the most valuable interactive behavior. During the filming process, students and the photographed become good friends, learning beyond the age and life background, which becomes the valuable experience of students. These series of documentaries on community have won the first prize of the Taiwan Labor Golden Awards in Campus Team, the Best Humanities Documentary in China's Yueguang Cup, the China Telecom Foundation's cooperation award.

4 Conclusion and future

This case combines the theory and practice, and its results and practical experience will be provided to the relevant international or Taiwan colleges and universities. The workable methods and processes may lead more teachers, students and communities to work together in the future to provide more images of different communities. It preserves the memory and appearance of local residents through audio-visual and digital humanistic services, contributes to the promotion of place making, and becomes a model for walking out of the campus into the community to serve the residents. In the past, teaching was centered on teachers, but now it is student-centered; in the past, the focus was on the performance of works on learning, but now it is on the attitude and process of learning; in the past, it focused on lectures and textbooks, but now it focuses on teaching interactions generated by different situations and example sharing; in the past, the learning was more passive, but now it is

converted to self-learning; in the past, students pursued personal creation, but now they know how to open up their minds to discuss social issues and care for the people of and the matters happening in the community. What is particularly touching is that there are always 2-3 teams who would continue to choose to shoot on documentary themes to concern about social issues each year as they enter the senior year. In the competition for the "Sustainable and Constructive News Award" in 2019, the student team in film category, two of the graduation works from our Department of Mass Communication, Tamkang University, won the first prize and the honor of excellence. In 2017, there was also a work that won the student's first prize. These are all contributable to the USR spirit that continues to influence the students to keep on using the narrative communication of the film to achieve self-affirmation and motivation.

References

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The "Beekeeper" of the "Annals of the Local Customs" won the first prize of the Taiwan Labor Golden Awards, Campus Team in 2015.

The "Annals of Anecdotes in Tamsui" won the 7th "Yueguang Cup", Student Film and Television Works Competition, Documentary Unit / Best Humanities Documentary in 2016.

The "City Ranger: Risky Roads not Risky" of the "Annals of Services Provided by Village Chiefs and the USR Program Teachers and Students" won the China Telecom Foundation Cooperation Incentives of NT\$250,000 in 2019.

Sustainable and Constructive News Award in 2019, Student Team, Film Category, "Bye! My Life with the Punch Card", The Slashies won the first prize; "The Memory is Full", Still Young won the excellent award.

The "Global Chinese Sustainable and Constructive News Award" in 2017, Student Team, Film Category, A Plastic Journey won the first prize.