

# Practicing Online Collaborative Cellphilmaking towards Diversity

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 global pandemic has disclosed the situation of many vulnerable populations in great difficulty and the necessity of tackling social justice issues. With the advancement of social media, during the lockdown period, a large number of people participated in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement not only in the United States but in other countries such as France, Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Incorporating diversity in education is very much needed at this critical moment. This study proposes online collaborative cellphilmaking as an arts-based pedagogy for grappling with social justice issues and promoting diversity. When digital youth collaborate together for cellphilmaking, how do they perceive social justice issues and reflect their ideas in a film? How does cellphilmaking in the classroom contribute to elevating an understanding of diversity? To examine these questions, I draw on the concept of space discussed by Bourdieu (1979/1984). In collaboration with twelve university students, an online cellphilmaking project commenced in June 2021, and a film *Colorful* was completed in January 2022. The created cellphilm shows the importance of paying attention to various colors, from the conspicuous to the unrecognized in daily life. Presenting some possibilities resulting from the film project, I argue that online collaborative cellphilmaking creates a new space that encourages the student filmmakers to gather together, come to grips with social justice issues, exchange ideas, become aware of diversity, and communicate their message to the viewers.

**Keywords:** arts-based pedagogy; collaborative filmmaking; diversity; higher education; online classroom

## Introduction

The world has confronted the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, and it has become clear that the pandemic has widened the disparity among people. In particular, many vulnerable populations have been hard hit by it (e.g., Bowleg, 2020; Lowell et al., 2022).

To make improvements to the situation, incorporating diversity in education is becoming increasingly important, for it is linked to the realization of the just society. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2014) clarifies the relation between education and society:

... education plays a key role in promoting social inclusion, tolerance and respect for diversity. It has been proven that education builds and spreads shared values and attitudes, fosters the integration and participation of everyone, and of marginalized communities in particular, and creates positive opportunities for social interaction and connectivity. (p. 46)

Putting diversity into practice in the classroom is essential for educating students to become responsible global citizens. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019) states: “Ensuring equity and the inclusion of diversity in education involves guaranteeing every person the possibility to feel a sense of belonging, self-worth, and to participate fully in society” (p. 27), there is a need to take all learners into account in order to achieve diversity in education.

Some studies have indicated the necessity of incorporating diversity into higher education. For instance, the U.S. Department of Education (2016) points out how it benefits students and schools:

Diverse learning environments help students sharpen their critical thinking and analytical skills; prepare students to succeed in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world; break down stereotypes and reduce bias; and enable schools to fulfill their role in opening doors for students of all backgrounds. (p. 5)

Shaw (2005) takes a similar view on this point:

... it seems both natural and necessary to study and understand the educational benefits of diversity in higher education in order to maximize these benefits and better prepare students for the diverse and multifaceted world they will be living in, and eventually leading. (p. 1)

Thus, embracing diversity in higher education provides these advantages for students who will go out into the world. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on higher education around the globe (e.g., Meda & Chitiyo, 2022; Office for Civil Rights, 2021; Petitions Committee of the House of Commons, 2020). The Office for Civil Rights (2021), for example, reports the hardships of university students: “For many students, COVID-19 has raised new barriers to getting a degree and made old barriers that much harder to overcome. For those already pursuing a degree, COVID-19 has also taken a heavy toll—financially, academically, and emotionally” (p. 31).

Japan was no exception to this. As proved by the collaborative project done together with a group of university students in Kumamoto between 2020 and 2021, the mobility restrictions severely affected their wellbeing. While being confined to their homes physically, they participated in online meetings, exchanged their ideas, and collaborated to make a film together. In this case, technology played a key role in activating online communication and preventing further isolation during the pandemic (Hara, 2022). As McLuhan (1964/2001) once pointed out the power of technology in connecting people around the world, it keeps making remarkable progress, and social media ease communication beyond and across the national borders. Hence, even in the lockdown period, George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis in May 2020 spread worldwide and urged a large number of people to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement not only in the United States but in other countries, including the United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand (Silverstein, 2021). The news of the BLM movement quickly reached Japan’s digital youth using social media and led to a recognition of racial and ethnic issues in society (Takahashi, 2020). Thus, the pandemic crisis has revealed the situation of those in great difficulty and the importance of realizing diversity.

At this critical moment, employing the arts in education can be a gleam of hope. According to previous studies, arts-based educational practices fulfill an important role in cultivating young people’s active and critical thinking skills and raising their awareness of diversity (e.g., Barone & Eisner, 2012; Goessling, 2021; Leavy, 2020; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2020). Films created with cellphones are called “cellphilmms”, and some arts-based scholars have advocated the significance of “cellphilmimg” as an alternative storytelling approach (e.g., Mitchell, et al., 2017; Wiebe & Smith, 2016). For example, Wiebe and Smith (2016) articulate its potential:

Text-only environments are comparatively abstract since concepts such as point of view, framing, bias, and so forth require students to imagine what is not in the text or to think beyond the text. However, when the text becomes visible through the materiality of cellfilms, these concepts are concrete and physical. (p. 95)

As suggested above, cellfilms can help learners catch difficult concepts visually and better understand them. Moreover, through the act of cellfilming, young people can transform themselves “... from being consumers of predetermined content to producers of their own” (Wiebe & Smith, 2016, p. 99). When digital youth collaborate together for cellfilming, how do they perceive social justice issues and reflect their ideas in a film? How does cellfilming in the classroom contribute to elevating an understanding of diversity? This paper explores the possibilities of cellfilming as an arts-based pedagogy for grappling with social justice issues and promoting diversity.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In this study, I draw on Bourdieu’s view that “... social space is to the practical space of everyday life, ... geometrical space is to the ‘travelling space’ (*espace hodologique*) of ordinary experience ...” (1979/1984, p. 165). Applying the concept as such is of benefit to this research project in two ways. First, it makes it possible to conceive that filmmaking with a cellphone is an everyday practice for digital youth and thereby embodies the “social space”. In Japan, many young people use cellphones to take photographs and videos and communicate on social media on a daily basis (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2017). Analyzing what is expressed in their film unfolds how they grasp and cope with social justice issues. Secondly, the employment of Bourdieu’s concept in this study enables us to see the link between the filmmakers and the viewers. From the screening of a completed film the “geometrical space” emerges since their intended message travels and is conveyed to the audiences. Hence, the act of making and showing a cellfilm not only connects the filmmakers and the viewers but combines the “social space” and the “geometrical space”.

This study also sets great store by the incorporation of diversity in education. Its definition varies since it has been actively argued, conceptualized, and renewed in the educational sectors (Messiou et al., 2022). Acknowledging the existence of various conceptions of diversity, I refer to the view that diversity means “[p]eople’s differences

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which may relate to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 7). I regard these differences as people’s identities that are complex, intersecting, flexible, and transformative. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan (2013), taking differences into consideration in the educational contexts is essential:

... education that enables all students to collaborate despite their differences in philosophy, gender, generation, and nationality will be important. It is also imperative to establish the contents, methods, venues, and schedule/times of education in accordance with differences in individuals’ personalities, capabilities, life directions, and social environments such as family circumstances. (“Respect for diversity in education” section, para. 7)

Similarly, Ainscow (2016) indicates that acknowledging differences is indispensable and has the possibilities:

... there is a need for radical new thinking regarding how schools can be supported in developing their capacity for responding to learner diversity. Underpinning our proposals is the belief that differences can act as a catalyst for innovation in ways that have the potential to benefit all students, whatever their personal characteristics and home circumstances. (p. 148)

I argue that cellphilmimg in the classroom involves working together towards the goal of making a film and thereby promotes “learner diversity” among the student filmmakers, for “[c]ooperation encourages understanding and acceptance” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 57) of differences.

The notion of “student voice” is inseparable from the discussion of diversity in education. Looking at the cases of the five European countries such as Austria, Denmark, England, Portugal, and Spain, Messiou et al. (2022) indicate: “As with diversity, the idea of student voice encompasses a range of meanings, from expression of views, either verbally or non-verbally, to active participation in decision-making” (p. 359). In this research project, I suggest that practicing cellphilmimg enables the student filmmakers to

express their ideas verbally as well as non-verbally through the use of text and image and also fosters their autonomy. Applying Bourdieu's concept of space and taking account of "learner diversity" and "student voice", I intend to show how cellphilmaking in the university classroom creates an alternative space that encourages the student filmmakers to come together, tackle social justice issues, exchange opinions, become aware of the diversity within, and communicate their message to the viewers.

### Methodology

Due to the new normality placing social distancing restrictions, online education was the option left. In the difficult situation as such, my seminar students (twelve in total) at a university in Kumamoto and I launched a collaborative cellphilmaking project in June 2021. We met online using Microsoft Teams every week. The twelve students (from 20 to 21 years old) specializing in intercultural communication are eager to gain skills to become global citizens capable of thinking critically and acting in the broad world. They started brainstorming for a movie by starting with the term "world" and thinking what would be associated with it. A variety of words were written down on a slide (Figure 1). Then they explained why they came up with those words, exchanged their ideas, and decided "colorful" as a movie theme. Mera explains the reason behind the decision:

The reason why we came up with this theme is because we have been learning about intercultural issues such as cultural diversity, education, gender, ethnicity, discrimination, stereotypes, and culture shock in our lectures. Through my learning, I realized that in intercultural communication, it is important to appreciate each other's differences.

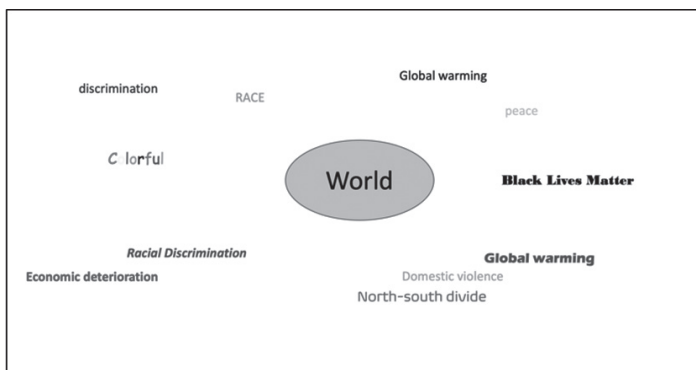


Figure 1. Brainstorming.

Once the theme was established, they created keywords associated with the term “colorful” in both English and Japanese (Table 1). During summer, they recorded images representing the keywords respectively. In the fall semester, the students shared the recorded images online and decided a shot sequence. They also recorded their voices reading their keywords and wrote a movie script. As an editor, I put the images in order as requested by using software, added their voices to the movie, synchronized music pieces with the images, and typed end credits. After the image and audio clips were arranged into one film, the students had an online meeting, watched it, exchanged their opinions, and discussed possible titles. In the end, they reached a consensus to entitle it *Colorful*.

Table 1. List of student filmmakers

Names in pseudonym	Created keywords in English	Created keywords in Japanese
Ray	Diversity	多様性
Mera	Belief	信じること
Becky	Shine	輝く
Chloe	Refreshing	さわやか
Kyrie	Waterfall	滝
Bekira	Sea	海
Smith	Peace	平和
Emma	Glimmer	きらめき
Chobi	Lights	光
Ai	Personality	個性
Penpen	Forward	前へ
Mia	Colorful	カラフル

### **Diversity: From the Producers’ Side**

As a result of the online collaboration, a film *Colorful* was completed in January 2022. The produced cellphilm, bilingual in English and Japanese, suggests the importance of paying attention to a variety of colors, ranging from the conspicuous to the unrecognized in daily life by showing various natural settings and man-made materials that are ordinary to the student filmmakers. It is obvious that a shot sequence is carefully constructed by them. Ray explains it in detail, focusing on the first three clips (Figures 2-4):

The videos are arranged so that they are a series of videos with similar motifs as the main subject. Numbers 1 to 3 are images with flowers as the main motif. As for the order, we tried to make the flowers exist gradually in a wide landscape. First, a bouquet wrapped in paper, then a bouquet in a vase, and then a field of flowers blooming naturally. By arranging the images in the order of the gradual swaying and other movements, we made the flowers appear to be gradually alive.



Figure 2. Shot #1 by Ray. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 3. Shot #2 by Mera. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.





Figure 4. Shot #3 by Becky. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.

Chloe talks about the following three shots (Figures 5-7):

We considered these three videos to be a “nature” group because these videos include the sky, rice fields, greenery, a waterfall, and the ocean which relate to “nature”. And sharing the common elements of “nature”, the three people took videos of completely different landscapes. This shows that there are as many opinions as there are people. Also, when we hear the word “colorful”, we think of colorful sceneries we see in our daily lives next to vivid flowers, so we decided to place the “nature” group next to the “flowers” group.



Figure 5. Shot #4 by Chloe. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 6. Shot #5 by Kyrie. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 7. Shot #6 by Bekira. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.

Penpen mentions the three shots from 7 to 9 (Figures 8-10):

The videos from 7 to 9 show sceneries and night scenes. The point of the shot order is to avoid unnaturalness when the images change from nature to artificial materials. We are also conscious of the flow of time in those images. I think that the gradual darkening of the images will not give the viewers a sense of discomfort.



Figure 8. Shot #7 by Smith. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 9. Shot #8 by Emma. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 10. Shot #9 by Chobi. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.

Chobi gives a detailed account of the last three shots (Figures 11-13):

The reason why we choose these videos in the last part is because our movie title is *Colorful*, so we think the ending scene should be literally colorful. Most videos are about nature like flowers, the sky, and sceneries. These three people's videos are a little bit different from others. In their videos, there are drawing, color balls, and balloons. These videos are more colorful and vivid than the other ones at a glance, so they are the best ending for our movie. In the last video taken by Mia, many colorful balloons fly into the sky, and we can imagine that we are free and we can do anything. This video might give the viewers courage, so we chose this video at the end of our movie.



Figure 11. Shot #10 by Ai. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 12. Shot #11 by Penpen. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.



Figure 13. Shot #12 by Mia. Still extracted from *Colorful*. 2022. © The Studio Twelve Stories, 2022.

In this way, the completed film consists of four sets of images, and the students created a script to insert between the sets (Figure 14).

#### **[Introduction]**

Imagine this. What colors do you see around you?

We are surrounded by many colors in our lives.

Each has a different saturation and a color depth.

In the same way, every human being on earth has different characteristics.

#### **Shots #1-3 placed**

#### **[Body 1]**

We want you to abandon the stereotype that the word "colorful" only means something vivid and beautiful.

Each color existing in nature is inconspicuous.

However, just as each person has their own personality, these colors have their own meaning.

#### **Shots #4-6 placed**

#### **[Body 2]**

The world as we see it is in all colors.

There is never a monochrome world.

We can see colors even if the world is dark.

#### **Shots #7-9 placed**

#### **[Conclusion 1]**

Everyone has their own face, way of thinking, values, and backgrounds.

Everyone is different, which is colorful.

Everyone is different, therefore life is beautiful.

#### **Shots #10-12 placed**

#### **[Conclusion 2]**

There are many different landscapes, flowers, and colors in the world.

It is the same for humans.

We should value our differences.

Be colorful, be free!

Figure 14. Structure of *Colorful*.

Mia's following words reveal what propelled the student filmmakers to write the above script: "Just as there are countless colors around us, all of us living on the earth have different qualities. I think it is important to recognize these differences and live together with each other in a caring manner". Hence, what the production team hopes to convey is condensed in the structure of the film and the created script.

Indeed, *Colorful* reflects the diversity of the production team. As seen in Figures 2-13, the "colorful" comes in many different interpretations and forms. Behind the well-arranged sequence of images and words, there exists a variety of views of the student filmmakers:

Ray: I took a movie of flowers. They come in many sizes, shapes, and colors. Each flower is beautiful in its own way, whether small or large. I believe that diversity is a collection of individualities. And individuality is the result of the presence of others. I think our world is beautiful and interesting because it is diverse. A bouquet of colorful flowers reminds me of a world made up of people with different personalities.

Mera: I took a video of flowers in a vase. These flowers were sent to me by my friends, and it is very special to me. The different kinds of flowers represent people, and the vase represents a community or the earth where people are living. I used a flashlight in a dark room to make the beauty of flowers stand out. I wanted each of us to believe that, just like the flowers, people with different looks and personalities are all wonderful.

Becky: I recorded sunflowers with my smartphone. I found a lot of beautiful sunflowers by chance. They were beautiful yellow and blowing in the wind. Moreover, the bright blue sky was spreading over the sunflowers. I was impressed with the view because the sunflowers and the sky were shining. I want to tell a lot of people that we can all shine, even if we have our differences.

Chloe: At first, when I thought about what "colorful" meant, colorful flowers and skies came to mind. And I was thinking of taking videos of them. But I changed my mind because I realized that the world is not monochrome, it is always colored

and everything is special. Therefore, I decided to take videos of daily things that we usually overlook, instead of deliberately looking for colorful things that are easy for people to see. Then I took a video of my grandmother's house in the countryside. There are green rice fields spreading out in front. We can only see this view in summer, so we are lucky. There is nothing around my grandmother's house that blocks this natural view such as tall buildings. I made a video of the daytime scenery with its beautiful blue sky and green nature. The word "refreshing" reminds us of nature or some colors such as green and blue, and I think it represents my video.

Kyrie: I chose "waterfall" as my keyword. Perhaps, you come up with this word, when you watch the video I recorded. I took a movie focusing on a waterfall and trees. The movie theme is colorful. I interpreted it as "everyone is special". My movie might not be multicolored, but I see the waterfall as one life. Trees are so. These natures are living as we do. I would like to express it through my movie.

Bekira: I took this video in my hometown. I think many people would answer "blue" when they are asked about the color of the sea. However, it is made with many colorful things. For example, fish, seashells, seaweed, sandy beaches, etc. In my hometown, there is a beach of glass, and it is a very colorful and beautiful place. The glass used to be trash but it was processed, so we can walk there without an injury. The glass also protects the sea. So I would like to tell the viewers that there is no trash, everyone is needed.

Smith: This movie was taken in my relative's house. In this movie, there are a lot of buildings. If you look over there, there are low-elevation mountains. There is a road between buildings, and some cars are moving. What I would like to indicate is how colorful and peaceful this area is. In this world, some countries are in conflict due to struggles for resources and confrontations between different religions. If a conflict occurs, especially buildings, crop fields, and well-paved roads will be destroyed. It is because of peace that we can see this view.

Emma: The word "glimmer" describes the way light sparkles and shines. I recorded

the moon as it began to shine in the sky in the dusk of the evening. On the day I recorded this moon, it was a beautiful crescent. And the sky was a gradation of light blue and orange. The moon is constantly changing its shape as it waxes and wanes. The sky and clouds also change their colors and shape every day, and no two are the same. The moon, sky, and clouds, with their various forms, are like the diversity of human beings.

Chobi: I took a video of a night view from a monorail with my phone. The night view consists of many colors of lights like street lights, car lights, and window lights, and they shine with an amber color and a bright color. In the video, firstly, I took the entire night view so we can see the scenery in the distance. I want to get viewers' attention and show them how beautiful the scenery is. After that, the buildings and lights are getting closer and bigger, as the monorail is descending. At first glance, a night view is just a beautiful thing, I mean just "one thing", but on the second thought, a lot of people are living in there. I think no one thinks that they are part of the beautiful scenery and each one is shining in the view. I want to tell that you are shining in your own color, so everyone is special.

Ai: In the first half of the video, I expressed diversity with color pencils. I think each color has its own beauty. In the second half of the video, I recorded a drawing made by the color pencils shown in the first half. I took this video at my parents' house and my sister drew the picture. I asked her to draw as she likes using her favorite colors. She seemed to enjoy drawing it very much. It is more fun to paint the way you want than the way you are supposed to do. There are many different people in the world, each with their own individuality. I want to use this video to convey that we should recognize everyone's personality.

Penpen: My keyword is "forward". I think it describes my video very well. If you look at my clip, you can see a human being made of fingers walking on some color balls. These color balls represent different regions and countries around the world. The way the person is walking on them shows that people are moving forward into an era of diversity. The word "forward" also carries an image of being future and progressive.



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Mia: I chose “colorful” in the sense that each person has a different color, and each one of them recognizes each other to create a colorful world. Every human being is different and has their own personality. The difference may be something you are born with, or it may be something you learn as you grow up. We need to accept each other’s differences in order to create a happy and peaceful world for everyone. I would like to see such a world. The balloons come in a variety of colors, but all of them are very beautiful. It seems to fit perfectly with the theme we set.

The comments of the student filmmakers above suggest that there is a wide diversity of interpretations and expressions of the “colorful” in the production team. In this way, a diverse student body spent eight months working together online and produced *Colorful* linking these diverse video clips together. The completed film is an outcome of the collaboration of the students with various viewpoints.

### **Diversity: From the Viewers’ Side**

It is meaningful to pay attention to how the viewers respond and interpret the created film. The examination of audience reception has been considered important in arts-based education and research (e.g., Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2020; Mitchell, et al., 2017). For instance, Leavy (2020) states that arts-based practices present “... a multiplicity of meanings” and can fill the role of being “... emotional, evocative, provocative, illuminating, educational, and transformative” (pp. 289-290) for the audiences. In October 2022, when some of the COVID-19 restrictions were eased on campus, *Colorful* was screened in-person at the university in Kumamoto. However, because the reduced classroom capacity was in effect, there was a limitation to the number of people who could be accommodated in a room. After the film screening, a total of twelve students participated in a survey about it (Table 2).

Table 2. List of survey participants

Names in pseudonym	Age
Ah	21
Anne	20
Bename	20
Chanko	20
Choco	20
Hank	21
Kaitlyn	21
Margot	20
Mary	20
Momo	20
Saburou	21
Strawberry Bonbon	20

The survey results show that *Colorful* left a favorable impression on all the study participants. In addition, their comments demonstrate a variety of interpretations among the audiences:

Ah: The image of the waterfall and surrounding forest was impressive. The word “colorful” first came to my mind as a collection of various colors. I understood from the movie that seemingly simple colors can look colorful depending on the viewer, and even a single color can be called colorful.

Anne: Many color balloons are free and beautiful, and it looks like an ideal world. There is a lot of sad news in the world, but in that situation, we are surrounded by colorful things.

Bename: It was very beautiful and interesting. It made me feel calm, and I found the importance of everything around us again. We have to look around and cherish them such as nature and people.

Chanko: These videos and music are beautiful. And each voice of the members is

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really good. The most impressive thing is the phrase: “We can see colors even if the world is dark”. This phrase encourages me.

Choco: “Everyone is different, therefore life is beautiful”. This expression is the most impressive to me. I think the words mean that people have each color and we should respect them.

Hank: The movie tells us people grow up in different situations, so they have many varieties of thinking, characters, and so on. Moreover, we should accept each other.

Kaitlyn: The colorful means diversity and also us, humans. Our lives are beautiful, and we should protect them forever.

Margot: The short video which appears in the end of the movie is the most impressive to me. It is a good representation of the “colorful”. I felt the scene is important because various people have colorful balloons, which also means their diversity or differences.

Mary: From the movie I received a message that we should value all personalities. Also, we can be freer and express ourselves.

Momo: I like this movie. Colorful things or colorful colors give us energy and support us. I know that colors have psychological effects. We unconsciously get mental support from colors around us.

Saburou: The videos that came along with the words, personally, matched quite well content-wise. I did not associate some of the words with the videos before watching the movie. It gave me new perspectives to see my daily life from a different angle.

Strawberry Bonbon: *Colorful* shows we have a lot of colors and differences are ordinary things. We have our own colors but all colors, personalities, and differences are valuable.

It becomes obvious here that the viewers with various viewpoints bring their respective lenses to watch the film and catch multiple meanings from it.

Indeed, the film screening creates the “geometrical space” that connects the student filmmakers conveying their message and the audiences responding and interpreting it. One of the production team members, Mia indicates what the collaboratively created film seeks to tell the viewers: “Instead of thinking in fixed ways, try looking at the world from a broader perspective. There are countless colors in the world. In the same way, each of us living on the earth has different qualities”. Embracing the message as such and starting with captions saying, “Imagine this. What colors do you see around you?”, *Colorful* invites the viewers to become traveling agents away from fixed ideas, and examine what is taken for granted from a different perspective.

### **Possibilities of Online Collaborative Cellphilmimg**

This study presents some possibilities of online collaborative cellphilmimg in the classroom. First, the collaborative film project raises awareness of diversity within the production team. This is evident in what Emma states:

Throughout the making of the film, I was able to hear each member’s video, their thoughts and concepts behind it, and their ideas for the structure of the videos. We realized that this was exactly the “colorful” we wanted to express in this film, that is, the diversity of individuals.

In this way, spending time interacting with each other helps the production team recognize the existence of diversity in the classroom. Next, this collaborative film project leads to the affirmation and reaffirmation of diversity around the globe. Smith’s comments confirm this point:

There are many colorful things in the world. For example, there are many diversities of human races, ways of life, ways of thinking, human values and so on. These are like colorful things. By regarding diversity as colorful things, I think we need to acknowledge each other.

It is clear here that online collaborative cellphilmimg links their learning in class to the

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real-life situation. Lastly, the acknowledgement, affirmation, and reaffirmation of diversity stimulates students' further thinking. This is supported by Bekira's following words:

I have learned different points of view from the group movie project. Especially, everyone took a variety of videos about "colorful" and they showed me the differences of ideas. Their keywords of their videos were great, and their words and videos made me think about the importance of colors more deeply.

Thus, online collaborative cellphilmimg has the potential of cultivating active and critical thinking of the students regarding diversity not only in their everyday lives but in the world.

At the same time, however, collaborating online is not an easy task. A collaborative project that is usually done face-to-face had to be conducted in the cyberspace. The student filmmakers' comments unfold their mental conflict due to the big shift in their learning from face-to-face to online. Chobi expresses her honest feelings:

It is a really tough situation with COVID-19. We cannot go out and eat outside with family and friends. If the Corona virus was not a terrible thing, I wanted to attend the class face-to-face. Online tools are very useful, but I miss my teacher and members.

Other seminar members also struggle to cope with the difficult situation. Nevertheless, the following words of the student filmmakers suggest that they are flexible and active in spite of the hardships:

Penpen: It was the first time for me to work on a movie with multiple people, so it was a fresh experience. It was difficult to discuss in groups and think about the order of clips and the text, but I think it raised our awareness.

Ray: Now we are not able to live a free life. We are limited because of the pandemic and deprived of our happy days. Sometimes, it makes us sad, but it does not mean that we are completely tied. Just as we created the movie with friends, even in online classes, there is a lot we can do.

Moreover, knowing the advantages and disadvantages of online communication tools and social networking services (SNS), digital youth endeavor to convey their message through their cellfilm:

Chloe: Nowadays, Instagramable is very popular, especially among young people, and it gives the impression of many things that stand out by being filled with bright colors. However, I want them to realize that nature has a variety of colors, even if they are not obvious, and that the world is colorful, even if it is not brightly colored.

Kyrie: Lately, with the development of SNS, we can communicate with each other and state own opinions. When someone has his dream and says his will, some people tend to respond negatively. Some people take their own lives because of it. I would like people to watch this wonderful movie and understand everyone is special.

In this way, making full use of their cellphones, the student filmmakers deal with social justice issues and show the existence of multifarious colors, ranging from the conspicuous to the unrecognized in their daily lives. Hence, the created film reveals the “social space” of digital youth who are under adverse circumstances because of the COVID-19 pandemic but are facing up to the difficulties with a forward-looking attitude.

## Conclusion

This paper has attached importance to incorporating diversity in education and proposed a model of online collaborative cellfilming as an arts-based pedagogy for tackling social justice issues and promoting diversity. The online collaborative film project, involving the twelve university students with various viewpoints, has displayed the following possibilities: 1) raising awareness of diversity in the classroom; 2) affirming and reaffirming diversity around the globe; and 3) accelerating students' further thinking. First, spending eight months communicating with each other has resulted in not only the creation of *Colorful* but the acknowledgement of diversity within the production team. Second, dealing with social justice issues has led to the affirmation and reaffirmation of diversity in the world. Finally, students' further thinking has been activated by

acknowledging, affirming, and reaffirming diversity.

In addition to these possibilities, in *Colorful*, the “social space” of digital youth becomes visible through what they capture with their cellphone cameras, from the natural settings to the man-made materials that are ordinary to them. Moreover, showing the created cellphilm embodies the “geometrical space” where their intended message travels and is communicated to the viewers. It is clear that the act of making and screening a cellphilm links the filmmakers with the audiences and also weaves the “social space” and the “geometrical space” together. Holding both “learner diversity” and “student voice” in great account, the online collaborative film project creates a new space that encourages the student filmmakers to assemble together, grapple with social justice issues, exchange ideas, realize the diversity within, and convey their message to the viewers. Cellphilmng is an emerging visual research method that needs further investigation. Applying it to various school settings is essential for exploring its possibilities and issues.

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