Chapter 27

How Powerful Is Digital Storytelling for Teaching? Perspective of Pre-Service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to reveal the opinions of pre-service teachers regarding the teaching of digital storytelling, which is one of the methods where students actively participate in the learning process, produce content, and learn while having fun, unlike the conventional methods. The research was undertaken as a case study. The study was carried out in Gazi University in the 2015-2016 academic year. The results of the research suggest that the pre-service teachers were mostly pleased with the digital storytelling task. Pre-service teachers who studied in groups were more satisfied and the pre-service teachers believed that digital storytelling positively affected many higher-order thinking skills, creativity in particular. Although higher-order thinking skills are not expected to improve with such short tasks, it can be suggested that the topic may have a positive effect.

INTRODUCTION

From the moment we are born, stories become the most meaningful parts of our lives, and they can remain in our memory for years. Stories allow us to review events in the form of imagined scenes, involving contexts, characters and actions (Lambert, 2013) and may not be forgotten for years. Throughout human history, stories have been the strongest and most natural way of sharing experiences, conveying values, giving messages, teaching, and encouraging thought and communication (Atchley, 2010; Smeda, Dakich,
In many cultures, people use stories to make the world which they live in more meaningful and convey information to new generations. The use of stories for educational purposes begins in the early childhood period as parents use stories to teach values and also help their children to understand the world more easily through language and metaphors (Duveskog, Tedre, Sedano, & Sutinen, 2012).

From an educational point of view, storytelling is an effective method to explain complex and unordered world events to students (Bruner, 1990). This encourages educators to use storytelling, one of the oldest forms of communication, to increase the permanence of learning and student engagement (Dreon, Kerper, & Landis, 2011), because students take the opportunity to play an active role in their own learning by re-interpreting their experiences rather than memorizing the information available. Thus, students do not only learn facts, but also come up with new ideas by adding their own experiences and reflections (Turner, 1994). With technological developments and the new technological tools that come along with these developments, the art of storytelling has been transformed into digital storytelling and has become a strong teaching and learning tool for teachers and students (Garrety, 2008; Robin, 2008a). With the development of Web 2.0 technologies in particular, the internet has become a platform on which people can share content about themselves. People have the opportunity for sharing their stories through digital means, using sites like Youtube, Instagram and Snapchat. In parallel with this, the personal stories created on digital platforms have begun to take on an important role in our daily lives. In this way social media has given people a chance to make their voices be more powerfully heard (Lambert, 2015). Digital storytelling, which offers a fun and creative learning environment for students, and allows them to use their imagination and learn in a meaningful manner (Wang & Zhan, 2010), is usually defined as the use of digital tools when telling a story. One of the definitions of digital storytelling has been described as “a process of creating a short movie that combines a script or an original story with various multimedia components such as images, video, music and narration, often with an author’s own voice” (Dogan, Bulent, & Robin, 2009). Robin (2008b) examines digital stories under three categories: Personal narratives, in which personal experiences and memories are shared; stories that inform or instruct, used primarily to convey instructional material in many different content areas, and stories that examine historical events.

Lambert (2002) suggested seven components which an effective digital story should have and Robin and Pierson (2005) developed these seven components and produced an expanded version in their study. These components are ‘The Overall Purpose of the Story’, ‘The Narrator’s Point of View’, ‘A Dramatic Question or Questions’, ‘The Choice of Content’, ‘Clarity of Voice’, ‘Pacing of the Narrative’, ‘Use of a Meaningful Audio Soundtrack’, ‘Quality of the Images’, ‘Video and other Multimedia Elements’, ‘Economy of the Story Detail’ and ‘Good Grammar and Language Usage’. These components are believed to guide students who want to create a digital story.

Some researchers describe the digital story creation process in steps. While Ohler (2013) listed these steps as planning, collecting materials and expert opinion, development and application, reviewing the draft, editing-finalizing, final review, sharing with others and describing the process, Kearney (2011) adopted the steps developed by Theodosakis (2001) for filmmaking in the classroom to the digital storytelling process. Information related to the stages of this process is given in Table 1.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that those studies which describe the digital story as a process consider the components of a digital story. Within the process of creating a digital story, students make more meaningful associations with the subject learned and also gain extracurricular experiences (Yang & Wu, 2012). The story creation process allows people to reflect on their experiences and maintain their independence during the process (Sawyer & Willis, 2011). Also, digital storytelling is believed to