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STORYTELLING

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A Proposal for a Narrative Study of Teachers' Digital Storytelling

Paul Perez-Jimenez

Ignacio Rodriguez

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The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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Introduction

The discourse on the nature of storytelling runs a broad gamut that stretches from empirically objective to theoretical and ontological and back to epistemic. Where the blurred distinctions form their boundaries may be as broad as the contents that use the storytelling phenomenon. While narratology might appear more concerned with the process of a narrative in contrast to narrative theory's dealing with the content of a story as a communication of an experience related. The focus of this narrative study deals with the later of these and encompasses “storied lives” (Mills 347) that teachers use to highlight important literacy lessons or objectives and to explore the teachers use of digital storytelling as a new literacy strategy that confirms its own pedagogical validity.

While the literature on storytelling's history and importance abound, and there is no doubt as to its credibility in the classroom (Andrews, Hull & Donahue; Ciasnocha, 2006; Livo & Rietz, 1986), the use of digital storytelling however is not as prevalent. And the logical question now seems to be who are the teachers that use digitally enhanced stories or what Knut Landby refers to as small-scale media form (Lundby, 2007). And, which vary greatly from the better full-fledged media known as film. Joe Lambert from California's Center for Digital Stories goes so far as to note that "digital stories themselves, as natural vehicles of reflection and understanding convey learning (p. 2012)

Need for the Study

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This study is important because it will illustrate an important factor in some educator's pedagogical skills that if not used in the twenty-first century classroom leads to a student deficiency that will impact our nation's future (Sadik, 2008). The digital vignettes that this study will highlight serve as an indication of some of the skills educators use to not only foster literacy in students but as a necessary surviving skill and deserve to be analyzed for teacher development. I believe the lack of storytelling in general, and digital storytelling in particular, comprise some of the major reasons why young novice teachers who lack this practical knowledge turn away from teaching in droves, for they do not understand the student of today. Furthermore, using the discourse of digital storytelling, voices with an unparalleled sense of ownership are to be recorded that at times illustrate digital literacy as a passion for the art of narration suggesting in itself a therapeutic process. Other emergent literacy patterns are noted, examined, and broadened. The process is acknowledged and suggestions on qualities of successful digital literacy lessons will be offered.

Statement of the Problem

In a digital world where technology becomes obsolete within six to ten months from inception, we live in a fast moving world. Educators must be actively up to date, informed and relay new media forms to a student population that takes advantage of this technology. The problem then arises from what a recent school superintendent called the lack of research that proves students benefit from digital literacy. Is this superintendent correct? I propose the opposite view and intend to show current literature review stating that our contemporary world now functions within a new literacy that encompasses all forms of communication and our high schools cannot afford to be left behind. Companies will be looking for students that are digital

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savvy much like Educause Learning Initiative, an IT company, who states that digital storytelling allows students "to develop a discerning eye for online resources, increasing their technology and media literacy" (2008).

Purpose of the Study

Consequently, the first purpose of this proposed qualitative study is to collect the narratives from educators that use digital forms of storytelling or stories as a function of effective learning/teaching. The second purpose is to determine how these narratives function as evidence or as a model of digital literacy to the student and of the educator's intentional strategy or digital tool for learning and/or teaching. Furthermore, in the process, I also aim to prove that the educator's storytelling is a valid mechanism for coping with the ever emergent pattern of lack of engagement known as boredom. I propose that storytelling and more importantly digital lessons involving storytelling in the classroom serve as positive classroom bonding that curbs student apathy that demoralizes by its simple existence. And finally, as an extension of the activity of storytelling in its digital version I will explore the benefits and drawback of this digital literacy from a student's perspective as well as a planning and resource perspective.

I will attempt to analyze and define storytelling through the conceptual framework known as New Literacies. UNESCO's definition of literacy underscores it as a "continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society" (2005) In order for our students to fully partake and contribute, I am convinced that my approach from a teacher's perspective

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which aspects that include pedagogy, curriculum, learning, education policy, and educational leadership hand in hand or alongside social, historical, and cultural aspects (Gee & Hayes, 2012).

Research Question(s)

The research question that will spearhead this study will include:

- Which teachers engage in digital storytelling?
- What defines a digital story or lesson?
- What are the benefits of digital literacy?

I propose to find evidence for digital storytelling from my local district as well as from a cohort made up of educators from Stanford Fellowship. As an active participant, I will also use my own observations, experiences, and stories. My project will take place primarily through a survey conducted online using Polldaddy. Questions that will be raised in nested design will initially involve a Likert-scale survey and will include the following general demographic information (see the first six lines) followed up with a recorded interview that will enhance the Likert type questions with further detail.

Survey:

Name
content teach

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grade level you teach						
how long have you taught						
highest degree you have						
What is your degree?						
		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
	Question	1	2	3	4	5
1	I use digital stories in my classroom.					
2	Students consider these digital stories interesting.					
4	My stories are personal and autobiographical.					
6	I allow students to use technology to tell stories.					
7	I use digital storytelling in my lessons.					
8	I find digital storytelling/lessons beneficial.					
Comments:						

Summary

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In our fast moving society storytelling in our families and our schools in its traditional form is not as prevalent as it should be and may be one of the reasons for student's poor performance in standardized assessments and lack of understanding, however, allowing digital illiteracy is the equivalent of a previous generation turning a shoulder on the printing press because it failed to accept new literacies. I propose to study the digital storytelling phenomenon in order to prove its value.

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