



Educational usage of digital storytelling by teachers in a virtual classroom

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Abstract

Digital storytelling has gained even more popularity through the use of web-based tools and blogs among almost every age group in numerous countries around the world. Although research studies about educational uses of digital storytelling have been conducted in specific countries, there is limited information about the current situation of using digital storytelling in education. The study used descriptive survey research designed to investigate educational usage of storytelling by teachers in a virtual classroom. The population of the study is 177 teachers. A sample of 50 primary school teachers from two primary schools was used for the study. Simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. The instrument used to collect data from respondents was a structured questionnaire titled Educational Usage of Story Telling in Virtual Classroom (EUSTVC) with 20 items. To determine the reliability of the instrument, test-re-test was applied to attain the reliability coefficient of 0.64. Data obtained were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The study found that teachers using digital storytelling play an important role in group works and collaborative learning within the classroom and improves students' communication skills. Furthermore, it was found that teachers using digital storytelling plays an important role in group works and collaborative learning within the classroom and improves students' communication skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Teachers should employ storytelling in their classrooms to improve students' retention and their learning outcome. Also, storytelling should be used to build children's literacy skills.

Keywords: educational usage, storytelling, virtual classroom

1. Introduction

As technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace, digital devices such as digital cameras, multi-functional cell phones, and personal computers, are increasingly being used in education to facilitate learning. Digital storytelling (DS) is one method for using these digital devices to support the educational process. There are many definitions of digital storytelling, but in general terms, digital storytelling is defined as telling stories and sharing information with multimedia tools and resources (Pelin, Bernard & Mcneil, 2014) ^[9]. In Ohler's (2008) ^[8] book, *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom*, the author describes digital storytelling as a creative process in which a traditional story is combined with personal digital technology, such as a computer, video camera, and sound recorder. The Digital Storytelling Association (2002) ^[4] elaborates on digital storytelling as the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling using digital media to create media-rich stories to tell, to share, and to preserve.

Digital storytelling can play an important role in group work and collaborative learning within the classroom. It enables pupils to create, multimedia resources using images, voice, text and music which can be shared with peers and the wider community. The term digital storytelling can also cover a range of digital narratives (web-based stories, interactive stories, hypertexts, and narrative computer games); it is sometimes used to refer to film-making in general, as of late, it has been used to describe advertising and promotion efforts by commercial and non-profit enterprises (Moursund, 1999) ^[6]

Digital stories derive their power through weaving images, music, narrative, and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid colour to characters, situations, and

insights." According to Robin (2009) ^[13], Digital storytelling in an educational setting is a process of creating short stories that allow students and educators to enhance their information gathering and problem-solving skills, and to, facilitate the ability to work in a collaborative team. Digital storytelling is commonly used by people to tell their own stories, and it also allows users a chance to create a social community around these stories. This use has grown because of the relatively low cost of digital devices, the ease of learning to create digital stories, and the availability of many sites on the web where stories may be displayed and shared (Meadows, 2003) ^[5].

Digital storytelling has the potential to be integrated into educational settings as a dynamic tool for teaching different subjects and concepts. It allows students to improve a wide range of learning skills (e.g. critical thinking, cooperation, self-regulation, etc.), literacies (e.g. technology, visual, digital, global, and information and cognitive/academic abilities (comprehension, self-expression, reflection, etc)). These skills lead to the development of various types of competencies including research-based competences; presentation, writing, technology, interview, assessment, and interpersonal skills; and organization and organization and problem-solving ability (Alcantud-Diaz, Ricart-Vaya, & Gregori-Signes, 2014) ^[11]. Nowadays teachers of many subjects use digital storytelling in their classes to make difficult learning issues more concrete and understandable (Ohler, 2008) ^[8]. In this regards, digital storytelling has been reported to increase the convergence of four student-centred learning strategies (Barret, 2006); student engagement, reflection for deep learning and the effective integration of technology into instruction.

Digital storytelling is a short form of digital media

production that allows everyday people to share aspects of their story. The media used may include the digital equivalent of film techniques (full-moon video with sound), stills, audio-only, or any of the other forms of non-physical media (material that exists only as electronic files as opposed to actual paintings or photographs on paper, sounds stored on tape or disc, movies stored on film) which individuals can use to tell a story or present an idea.

Meadows (2003) ^[5] stated that digital storytelling is a personal story which makes use of digital cameras, computers, and non-linear authoring tools to form short, multimedia narratives. Robin (2008) further classified digital stories in three categories: personal narratives, stories that examine historical events, and stories that are primarily used to inform or instruct.

The Center for Digital Storytelling (2010) has been very influential in identifying the major components of a digital story by breaking the creative process into seven steps. This process, known as “The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling” includes the following components: (1) Point of View shows the purpose and author’s perspective of the story, (2) A Dramatic Question arouses the audience’s curiosity and will be given an explanation by the end of the story, (3) Emotional Content involves the audience in the story, (4) The Gift of Voice helps the audience understand the story through personalization of the narration, (5) The Power of Soundtrack supports the story with appropriate music, (6) Economy avoids overloading the viewer with excessive use of visuals and/or audio, and (7) Pacing provides a rhythm to the story and deals with how slowly or quickly the story is told.

Robin and Pierson (2005) ^[12] described multiple ways of using digital storytelling in the classroom and presented an expanded and modified version of the Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling. The expanded elements, combined with the traditional seven elements are shown below.

1. The Overall Purpose of the Story
2. The Narrator’s Point of View
3. A Dramatic Question or Questions
4. The Choice of Content
5. Clarity of Voice
6. Pacing of the Narrative
7. Use of a Meaningful Audio Soundtrack
8. Quality of the Images, Video & other Multimedia Elements
9. Economy of the Story Detail
10. Good Grammar and Language Usage (Robin & Pierson, 2005) ^[12].

Digital storytelling can be used to reinforce subject matter, to share an experience or present some new information in a creative and way. It can be used as homework, classroom group projects, or a holiday project for students. If a teacher wants to start by giving his students something small and perhaps ask them to create a short 30 seconds video report on a movie that they have watched recently. Another assignment that would interest many students would be to make a video on their own lives. Digital storytelling requires various tools to create the story, including a computer. An internet connection, a camera or a video recording tool, a voice recorder or microphone, a music

keyboard and a scanner can also be used. These tools can enhance and bring life to a digital story (Professional Learning Board, 2016) ^[10].

A virtual classroom is an online learning environment that allows for live interaction between the teacher and the learners as they are participating in learning activities. Virtual classroom can also be referred to as course materials, homework, tests, and assignments that are typically used in self-paced learning. However, all of these activities are external to the classroom expression (Racheva, 2019) ^[11]. In other words, the virtual classroom is a shared online space where the learners and the tutor work together simultaneously. The most common tools that are found in a virtual classroom are videoconferencing, online whiteboard, instant messaging tool, participation controls and breakout rooms where storytelling can improve students’ retention rate in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Digital storytelling has gained even more popularity through the use of web-based tools and blogs among almost every age group in numerous countries around the world. Although research studies about educational uses of digital storytelling have been conducted in specific countries, there is limited information about the current situation of using digital storytelling in education throughout the world. A major focus of this research study was to determine how teachers around the world are using digital storytelling to support the educational process.

Aim of the study

The study investigated the educational usage of digital storytelling by teachers in virtual classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

1. Assess the usage of digital storytelling in the classroom
2. Examine the benefits of digital storytelling in the classroom

Research Questions

1. How are teachers using digital storytelling in classrooms?
2. What are the benefits of using digital storytelling in the classroom?

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey research designed to investigate the educational usage of storytelling by teachers in a virtual classroom. The population of the study is 177 teachers in private schools in Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt. A sample of 50 primary school teachers from two primary schools namely; Tower of Love Montessori School and Eni-Charles primary school Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt were used for the study. Simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. The instrument used to collect data from respondents was a structured questionnaire titled Educational Usage of Digital Story Telling in Virtual Classroom (EUSTVC) with 20 items. To ensure validity, the instrument designed by the researcher was given to experts in the field of educational foundation. To determine the reliability of the instrument, test-re-test was applied to attain

the reliability co-efficient of 0.64. Data obtained were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: How are teachers using digital Storytelling in classrooms?

Table 1.1: Usage of storytelling in the classroom

S/N	Usage of Storytelling in the classroom	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Storytelling is used to reinforce the subject matter	3.44	0.61
2.	It is used to share an experience or present some new information in a creative and interesting way	3.20	0.53
3.	Storytelling is used as homework	3.36	0.56
4.	It can also be used as group work projects or a holiday project for students	3.08	0.69
5.	Can be used to improve students writing with digital stories	3.52	0.57
6.	Facilitate the discussion method in the classroom	3.24	0.68
7.	Improves retention	3.36	0.52
8.	Provides the opportunity for feedback	3.18	0.59
9.	Digital storytelling appeals to students with diverse learning styles	3.26	0.63
10.	Retelling and creating their stories support their oral language development	3.32	0.53
	Average Mean	3.29	0.59

Table 1.1 revealed that teachers accepted all the item as to how teachers use digital storytelling in the classroom. This is because all the item mean was above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, the study found that teachers using digital storytelling play important role in group works and collaborative learning within the classroom and improves students’ communication skills.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits of using digital storytelling in classrooms?

Table 1.2 revealed that teachers accepted all the item as their benefits for using digital storytelling in the classroom. This is because all the item mean was above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, the study found that teachers using digital storytelling play important role in group works and collaborative learning within the classroom and improves students’ communication skills.

Table 1.2: Benefits of storytelling

S/N	Items Benefits of storytelling	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Digital storytelling plays an important role in group work and collaborative learning within the classroom	3.50	0.50
2.	It enables pupils to create multimedia resources using images, voice, text and music which can be shared with peers and the wider community	3.34	0.47
3.	The digital story produced may be published on the school websites, virtual learning environment or made available on the school’s network to other classes	3.56	0.50
4.	Creating digital stories will enable pupils to learn how to be safer and more responsible digital publishers as they learn about copyright, citing sources and the responsible use of personal information and images	3.34	0.47
5.	Great way to engage pupils and teachers	3.42	0.49
6.	Improves creativity	3.38	0.49
7.	Digital storytelling improves students’ critical thinking skills	3.50	0.50
8.	It improves students’ communication skills	3.54	0.50
9.	It improves resource selection	3.46	0.50
10.	It helps students do extensive research on the topic they have chosen to work on	3.50	0.50
	Average Mean	3.45	0.49

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How are teachers using digital storytelling in virtual classroom?

The study found that storytelling is used to reinforce subject matter and can be used to improve students writing with digital stories and improve retention. The study is in agreement with those of Nor Hasni, Michi, & Sharifah (2011) [7] who found that storytelling has beneficial effects on reading skills by the student being able to associate meaning and emotions with words.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits of using digital storytelling in classrooms?

The study found that teachers use digital storytelling plays

an important role in group works and collaborative learning within the classroom and improve students’ communication skills. The study is in agreement with those of Di Blas & Ferrari (2014) [3] who found that students receive a number of benefits, both direct (ie. Curricular, traditional) and indirect (ie. non-curricular, non-traditional like professional attitude).

Conclusion

The following conclusion was made by the researchers

1. The study found that storytelling is used to reinforce subject matter and can be used to improve students writing with digital stories and improve retention.
2. The study found that teacher’s usage of digital

storytelling plays an important role in group works and collaborative learning within the classroom and improves students' communication skills.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion, the researchers recommend that

1. Teachers should employ storytelling in their classrooms to improve students' retention and learning outcome.
2. Storytelling should be used to build children's literacy skills.

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