

Integrate Digital Storytelling in Education

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Abstract

In the 21st century, educators believe using technology can be an effective factor in education for the new generation, making educational goals easier to achieve. In fact, technology is being studied by teachers and implemented into classrooms for a positive effect on student learning. Many teachers are integrating multimedia tools in teaching students different skills including synthesizing, analyzing, evaluating, and presenting information. When students use technology, they learn to convert data into information and transform information into knowledge. Also, using multimedia tools gives students the opportunity to participate and interact in the classroom. Consequently, the trend for integrating technology into education has become more widespread in most schools today. Digital storytelling is one of the multimedia tools that can support teaching and learning as well as students' motivation. This research explores how digital storytelling can be an effective tool for both teachers and students in order to support learning and skills.

Keywords: Multimedia tools, Digital storytelling, Students skills and their motivation.

1. Introduction

The numbers of technological devices that can be used to manipulate information and improve student education is increasing every day. Teachers and students have commonly used technological tools for educational purposes, such as Microsoft PowerPoint and Word for their papers and presentations (Sadik, 2008). Today, however, these available tools extend far beyond Word and PowerPoint where both teachers and students are able to use advanced technology such as Multimedia Builder, Hyperstudio, Movie Maker and iMovie. These programs allow teachers to crop, edit, and create a useful movie as well as provide a good constructive tool through which to teach students cooperation, production and project management in order to integrate technology in education. Within the last 10 years, digital cameras, editing software, authoring tools and electronic media outlets have encouraged teachers to utilize many more approaches and technological tools to help students construct their own knowledge and ideas, and to present and share them more effectively (McLellan, 2006). One form of multimedia that is becoming more popular in education is digital storytelling, because educators realize the possibilities for this tool in the classroom. Robin (2005) indicated that one of the most powerful tools in multimedia is digital storytelling. Digital storytelling, like traditional storytelling, revolves around a chosen theme. Students conduct some research, write a script, and develop an interesting story. However, there is significant difference between digital storytelling and traditional storytelling. Digital storytelling is supported by a variety of digital multimedia. Digital stories bring together a mixture of graphics, text, recorded audio narration, video and music to present information on a specific topic through the use of technology.

In 1990, Joe Lambert developed digital storytelling in the virtual world as the cofounder of the Center for digital storytelling (CDS). Since then, Lambert and the CDS have worked to provide training and assistance to people interested in creating and sharing their personal narratives (Robin, 2008). Moreover, today, the CDS is working to develop and disseminate the Seven Elements of digital storytelling (see Table 1), which aids teachers in creating digital stories with their students (Robin, 2008).

Center for Digital Storytelling's Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

1- Point of view	Told for a specific purpose or to make a point for a given audience.
2- A dramatic Question	Gives a reason for the audience to stay interested; answered question by the end of the story.
3- Emotional content	Images, tone and effects connects the story to the audience.
4- The gift of your voice	Personalizes the story for the audience to help them to understand the context.
5- The power of soundtrack	Music or other sound that supports the storyline and conveys emotion.
6- Economy	Uses just the necessary elements to tell the story.
7- Pacing	Controls the story; and how slowly or quickly it unfolds.

Table 1: Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

Many teachers apply digital storytelling in their classroom because the CDS helps them overcome some of the obstacles to using technology in their classrooms. Digital storytelling is an especially good technology tool because it has features that cannot be found in other technological tools. For instance, this tool combines researching, creating, analyzing, and combining visual images with written text, which is considered a positive style in teaching. Robin (2005) argued that integrating visual images with written text both enhances and accelerates student comprehension. In addition, digital storytelling has a variety of applications in the classroom, including personal telling stories, narrating past events, or being used as a means to teach on a particular topic (Jakes, 2006). Technology of this kind can be an effective instructional tool for teachers.

2. Digital Storytelling as an Effective Instructional Tool for Teachers

Digital storytelling can help teachers save time and effort. Some studies argue that teachers who use digital storytelling more effectively encourage their students to engage in discussion, participation and make content more comprehensible. As Robin (2008) suggested, "Teacher created digital stories may also be used to enhance current lessons within a larger unit, as a way to facilitate discussion about the topics presented in a story and as a way to make abstract or conceptual content more understandable" (p.10). Moreover, digital storytelling provides teachers a unique way to present new material without taking a long time to help students understand the difficult information. Many researchers found that use of digital storytelling in teaching helps students retain new information as well as aids in the comprehension of difficult material (Robin, 2008). Therefore, digital storytelling can be a bridge between existing knowledge and new material (McLellan, 2006).

Additionally, digital storytelling provides teachers with a powerful collaboration tool that can be used in their classrooms. This tool can be used to encourage teachers to prepare their own stories for their students and connect with peers in other schools to build their own collaborative learning spaces. Teachers can create digital storytelling from the content or have their students do it to demonstrate their understanding of the content. The greatest benefit in the classroom may be found when students are asked to create their own digital stories, either individually, or as members of a small group (Sadik, 2008). All these factors show the importance of using digital storytelling to help teachers improve instruction and promote student learning.

3. Digital Storytelling as an Effective Tool for Students

Digital storytelling can provide many significant benefits to students who have the opportunity to learn how to create their own digital stories. Students may be given assignments in which they are asked to research a topic, look for pictures, record their voice and then choose a particular point of view, as described in the seven elements of digital storytelling. This process helps to enhance student's knowledge and academic skills. Robin (2008) argues that educators should use digital storytelling to support students' learning by encouraging them to organize and express their ideas and knowledge in an individual and meaningful way. In this manner, students can work together to prepare their digital stories to help them develop communication skills as well as foster collaboration by working in groups. According to Robin (2005), "students who participate in the creation of digital stories may develop enhanced communications skills by learning to organize their ideas, ask questions,

express opinions, and construct narratives” (p. 5).

In addition, using digital storytelling in the classroom is a powerful instructional technique providing an exceptional learning experience for students. When digital stories are shared on the Web, students have the opportunity to view the work of others. They learn cultural differences, and gain experience with the process of peer review to expand their own knowledge. Jakes (2006) confirmed digital storytelling helps students explore the meaning of their own experience, give value to it, and communicate the experience on multiple levels to others. Sadik (2008) indicated that including storytelling in the social studies curriculum develops students’ understanding of democratic ideals, other cultures and citizenship; improves their communication skills; motivates them to connect the past and the present; and shared experiences.

Although using stories to develop literacy is one of the oldest styles of education, digital storytelling allows the development of the different types of literacy that students will need in the 21st century. Digital storytelling expands to improve various literacy skills for the 21st century such as: information, visual, technology, and media. In fact, students need to research, discuss and analyze various issues and use computers and other technology to create the digital stories. Robin (2005) indicated that students who create digital stories improve different technological skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia tools including working with text, still images, audio, web publishing, scanners, digital still cameras, video cameras and working with music and sound effects. These multiple skills are aligned with the age of technology as 21st century literacy (Muller, Eklund, & Sharma, 2006). These challenges help to increase students’ motivation to learn and increase their desire to complete their digital storytelling successfully.

Involving students in this type of activity, based upon the use of multimedia, can enhance student’s motivation to improve their learning and performance. Because motivation is a critical ingredient for learning, teachers should use a variety of methods in their instruction to promote motivation. Research studies demonstrate the benefits of multimedia in general, and digital storytelling helps to increase students’ motivation to engage in class activities. Therefore, teachers should learn effective ways to motivate their students to become more engaged in learning new content with the help of multimedia technologies (Muller et al., 2006).

4. Conclusion

Multimedia is a powerful and beneficial tool in teaching students, and educators should endeavor to find multiple ways to integrate it into their classroom and assignments. More specifically, the technology tool of digital storytelling is especially effective in developing academic skills and motivation in students. This medium incorporates higher order thinking skills into projects because the student must research the question, evaluate information and create something. At the same time, it enables teachers to increase understanding of new material, and enhance students’ motivation while working collaboratively in the classroom. Therefore, digital storytelling provides a real way to help teachers and students learn how to effectively apply technology both in and out of the classroom. Research must continue to investigate how digital storytelling can help students develop the skills necessary for the future and prepare them to be successful. Finally, digital storytelling can be an effective tool to inform and enlighten new generations of students and educators for years to come (Robin, 2005).

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