

J. Michael Spector · Dirk Ifenthaler
Demetrios G. Sampson · Pedro Isaias
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Chapter 9

Digital Storytelling: Emotions in Higher Education

Sandra P.M. Ribeiro, António A.F.G. Moreira,
and Cristina M.F. Pinto da Silva

Abstract In tandem with the deep structural changes that have taken place in society, education must also shift towards a teaching approach focused on learning and the overall development of the student. The integration of technology may be the drive to foster the needed changes. We draw on the literature of pertaining to the role of emotions and interpersonal relationships in the learning process, the technological evolution of storytelling towards Digital Storytelling and its connections to education. We argue Digital Storytelling is capable of challenging HE contexts, namely the emotional realm, where the private vs. public dichotomy is more prominent. Ultimately we propose Digital Storytelling as the aggregator capable of personalizing Higher Education while developing essential skills and competences.

Keywords Digital storytelling • Emotion • Higher education

1 Introduction

In the complex society we live in, with the unforeseen future demands and the need for competence development, it has become widely acknowledged that approaches to teaching and learning need to encourage greater student involvement anchored in constructivist perspectives. As Laurillard (1993), among others, has argued, higher levels of thinking and cognitive development occur in contexts that stimulate curiosity, problem-solving and reflective, critical thinking skills (see also the work of

S.P.M. Ribeiro (✉) • C.M.F. Pinto da Silva
School of Accounting and Administration of Oporto, Polytechnic of Porto,
Rua Jaime Lopes Amorim s/n, São Mamede de Infesta 4465-004, Portugal
e-mail: sribeiro@iscap.ipp.pt; spmribeiro@gmail.com; csilva@iscap.ipp.pt

A.A.F.G. Moreira
Departamento de Educação, Campus de Santiago, Universidade de Aveiro,
Aveiro 3810-193, Portugal
e-mail: moreira@ua.pt

Schön, 1983 and others), where students are actively engaged in learning, in the construction of knowledge (see the work of Dewey, Freire, and Vygotsky, for example). In the foreword of the book *Education for judgment: the artistry of discussion leadership*, Elmore (1991) states:

The aim of teaching is not only to transmit information, but also to transform students from passive recipients of other people's knowledge into active constructors of their own and others' knowledge. The teacher cannot transform without the student's active participation, of course. Teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge of their own learning, individually and collectively. (p. xvi–xvii)

For many teachers in higher educational contexts, the challenge lies in attempting to understand the emerging educational context and the creation of learning environments that will make the development of higher-order cognitive abilities possible while encouraging teachers and students to thrive in what has been said to be the new technological paradigm: informationalism (Castells, 2000). The integration of technology in education has been acknowledged to enhance student engagement on all educational levels (Bates & Bates, 2005; Latchman, Salzman, Gillet, & Bouzekri, 1999; Laurillard, 1993, 2013). As students become not only consumers but also active content creators, and literature demonstrates that technological integration in HE may constitute an interesting strategy to motivate student learning (see Bates & Poole, 2003; Daniel, 1998; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Laurillard, 1993; Rogers, 2000), it invites the question whether digital technology, particularly Digital Storytelling (DS) can possibly foster a more *personalized* Higher Education (HE). However, *getting personal* in HE, especially through *stories* seems to give raise to conflicting views. Based on the literature, we analyze and discuss emotion, interpersonal relationships, and storytelling in order to seek further understanding regarding the possible reasons for this contradiction and argue Digital Storytelling might be a feasible approach to reemerge the *emotional* and *personal* in HE.

2 Getting Personal in Higher Education

After thirty years of research, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) concluded that “Modern colleges and especially universities seem far better structured to process large numbers of students efficiently than to maximize student learning” (p. 646), given that there are other essential dimensions beyond the cognitive skills and intellectual growth that HEIs that are still lacking. These include consideration of students' psychosocial changes, related to identity and self-concept; those related to others and the world; those related to values and attitudes; and those related to moral development. If HE is to be viewed as a facilitator for positive overall student development, all stakeholders involved need to rethink learning to include more than scientific knowledge.

Illeris (2003) conceptualized this interplay of multiple dimensions and processes into a model of learning. The author (2003, 2003, 2008) claims learning implies a

series of processes that “lead to relatively lasting changes of capacity, whether they be of a motor, cognitive, psychodynamic (i.e., emotional, motivational or attitudinal) or social character, and which are not due to genetic-biological maturation” (2003, p. 397). This definition of learning demonstrates that it cannot be separated from personal development, socialization, and qualification. The author explains that learning implies the integration of two processes—an external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural, or material environment, and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration—and three dimensions—the content dimension, usually described as knowledge and skills, but also many other things such as opinions, insight, meaning, attitudes, values, ways of behavior, methods, strategies, and so on; the incentive dimension which comprises elements such as feelings, emotions, motivation, and volition and whose function is to secure the continuous mental balance of the student; and the interaction dimension, which serves the personal integration in communities and society and thereby also builds up the student’s social dimension.

Illeris draws on the work developed by Vygotsky (1978) and Furth (1987), who acknowledged the connection cognition and the emotion. While cognition is connected to meaning making, the emotional content, Illeris defends, secures mental balance. The social dimension’s main function is personal integration in communities and society. Other scholars who recognize this three-dimensional interplay in learning—meaning, personal (self and identity), and contextual interaction—are Lave and Wenger (1991) in what they describe as situated learning and Wenger (1998), on communities of practice, where learning is perceived as “a way of being in the social world, not a way of coming to know about it” (Hanks, 1991, p. 24).

While cognition is embraced and nurtured in HE, emotion and close interpersonal relationships are aspects that, despite the literature advocating their relevance, still tend to be disregarded in favor of more traditional approaches to teaching and learning, as these are considered private and beyond the scope of HE (see the work of Clark, 1983; Clegg & David, 2006; Clegg & Rowland, 2010; Leathwood & Hey, 2009; Morley, 2003). Thus, regardless of the current emphasis on student-centered learning approaches, considerable effort is made to maintain the firmly established boundaries and the distance deemed necessary.

2.1 Situating Emotion in Higher Education

Stones (1978) was amongst the first scholars to talk about the convergence of psychology and teaching, in what he termed as *psychopedagogy*, which means applying theoretical principles of psychology into teaching, in order to enhance teaching and its affective context, establishing a link between cognition and emotion. Although current literature often tends to associate psychopedagogy with learning problems, Saravali (2005), for example, recognizes the role of psychopedagogy in HE, where teachers are asked to facilitate meaningful learning at a time when students of all ages face personal development challenges, as we have seen. Saravali admits

knowledge on student development and pedagogy is useful to help students, both socially and affectively. Emotions are essential for human survival and adaptation as they affect the way we see, interpret, interact, and react to the world that surrounds us (Horsdal, 2012). Boler (1999) admits emotions are underexplored in education. We concur with the author that it is not that pedagogy of emotions should prevail, and that teachers and students should disclose their innermost secrets and feelings to each other in the classroom. As teachers we do need to be aware of the intrinsic implicit and explicit relations in higher educational settings and consider the reasons why emotions have systematically been discouraged at this educational level.

Boler (1999) claims emotions are embodied and situated, in part sensational and physiological, consisting of actual feeling—increased heartbeat, adrenaline—as well as cognitive and conceptual, shaped by beliefs and perceptions. The author identifies three deeply embedded conceptions surrounding emotions, which may allow us to better grasp the reasons behind the apparent duel. Emotions have been conceived as private experiences people are taught not to express publicly; they are a natural phenomenon people must learn to control, and are an individual (intimate) experience. Finally, emotion has been excluded from the HE's pursuit of truth, reason, and knowledge. To address emotion is risky business, especially when, as the author argues, reason and truth prevail in HE. Emotions still tend to be associated with what the author describes as “‘soft’ scholarship, pollution of truth and bias” (Boler, 1999, p. 109), despite the proliferation of findings from the neurosciences advocating emotions as natural and universal and always involved in the learning process (see Scherer & Ekman, 2009, as well as Damasio, 1994, 2000, and Bartram, 2015 for example).

In his theory of consciousness, neurobiologist Damasio (2000) argues feelings and high-level cognition are intimately connected. The author claims a person's emotions can either inhibit or foment the brain's rational functioning. Additionally, consciousness of the world and of the self emerge in the same process. Damasio (2000) explains: “the presence of you is the feeling of what happens when your being is modified by the act of apprehending something” (p. 10). Thus, all that occurs to a person is emotionally laden. Damasio links not only cognition and emotion, but also the process of meaning making, or learning. Given the significance of this finding, the last 10 years has seen an increase in the literature on emotions in education. Schutz and Lanehart (2002) state “emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning process and, therefore, an understanding of the nature of emotions within the school context is essential” (p. 67). Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) emphasize the bound relationship between emotion, learning, and context in their recent article *We feel, therefore we learn*, where they discuss the relevance of emotions and social context on learning. The authors claim:

Modern biology reveals humans to be fundamentally emotional and social creatures. And yet those of us in the field of education often fail to consider that the high level cognitive skills taught in schools, including reasoning, decision making and processes related to language, reading, and mathematics, do not function as rational, disembodied systems, somehow influenced but detached from emotion and the body. (p. 3)

These authors, among others, assert context enables social feedback, deploying emotions, which foster self-regulation, coping and an adequate response. Perry (2006) eloquently explains this process as such:

Optimal learning depends on (...) a cycle of curiosity, exploration, discovery, practice, and mastery, which leads to pleasure, satisfaction, and the confidence to once again set out and explore. With each success comes more willingness to explore, discover, and learn. The more the learner experiences this cycle of discovery, the more he or she can create a lifelong excitement for, and love of, learning. (p. 26)

Zull (2002) claims it is hard to make meaning unless it engages students' emotions. They are inseparably linked to task motivation and persistence, and, therefore, to critical inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999). Caine and Caine (1991) argue teachers understanding of the human brain would allow them to take advantage of the natural processes so as to increase the students' meaning making capabilities. The authors claim the search for meaning is instinctive and occurs through patterning, a process where emotions are critical. The authors admit negative emotions, such as embarrassment, fear of others' reactions and threat, inhibit learning experiences (see also, for example, Ruthig et al., 2008), and affect memory (Kensinger & Corkin, 2003). Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, and Perry (2002) found that positive emotions such as enjoyment, hope, and pride were connected to deeper cognitive processing and critical thinking whereas negative emotions, such as boredom, were associated negatively with such cognitively demanding processing strategies. Dirkx (2001) and Clark and Dirkx (2008), for example, argue emotion and imagination are integral to the process of adult learning. Beard, Clegg, and Smith (2007) found that emotion is rarely acknowledged. However, they demonstrate the importance of the affective, the bodily and sociality in relation to student engagement with learning in H. Shoffner (2009), when discussing preservice teachers, claims that reflection and the affective domain are closely entwined, positing that the personal plays an important, yet often overlooked, role in development.

As empirical studies proliferate and claim positive connections between emotion and learning in HE, some authors recommend a cautious approach and alert to the risks involved. Rai (2012) examined the significance of emotion in assessment through reflective or experiential writing in the context of professional practice-based learning. The author found that reflective writing raises important issues in relation to emotion for both students and teachers assessing their texts. While admitting the advantages of personal, emotionally laden reflective writing, Rai adverts to the full complexity of the impact of emotions. Tobin (2004) also explores some of the academic literature focusing on writing personal reflective accounts and contends that while teachers should encourage emotion in the classroom, there is a degree of risk. The author explains:

By asking students to look beneath the surface of things, to explore entrenched opinions and values, to examine new perspectives, to write what they don't know about what they know, we are likely to make our teaching more exciting and more meaningful—for us and for them. We are also likely to make it more stressful and even a little dangerous. (p. 84–85)

For Tobin (2004) and Rai (2012) personal, reflective writing translates into a focus on emotions, in line with Schön's (1983) view of reflection as an emotional process. On this account, Brantmeier (2013) also claims learning that involves reflective critical-thinking activities allows students to be flexible and fluid, responsive to future yet unforeseen contextual needs. The author admits emotions invite vulnerability that, despite the risks discussed previously, is able to deepen learning.

Brantmeier argues the dialogic learning process should be based on the following premise: share, co-learn, and admit you do not know. Closer personal relations, whether between students or between students and teachers, step beyond the confines of what has traditionally been deemed as appropriate for HE. Personal or emotional aspects are met with mental barriers that pose difficulties to overcome but necessary to manage.

2.2 Interpersonal Relationships in Education

Emotions are not only deeply embedded in learning processes; they are part of the interpersonal dynamics, which comprise any learning context. Interpersonal relationships within educational contexts, whether they are teacher–student or student–student relationships, are complex and deeply rooted in social perceptions of teaching and learning.

Humans are social beings and therefore learning to be implies the development of interpersonal competencies. Within this scenario, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and learning cannot be disassociated, nor can we disregard any one of these aspects as they are intimately intertwined. Interpersonal relationships in education have, in truth, been the subject of numerous theoretical and empirical studies from multiple scientific perspectives over the last decades.

Given the social changes and the shift toward student-centered approaches in education, studies have emerged emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships and admitting the value of the teaching and learning process derives from the type and quality of the established relationships. For example, in his book *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, Ramsden (2010) discusses the relevance of emotional aspects in interpersonal relationships, namely teacher–student relationships, while relegating teaching and learning approaches. The substantial amount of literature seems to confirm that positive teacher–student relationships have extensive effects on students.

A review of the literature establishes a connection between positive teacher–student relationships and greater student confidence, acceptance, happiness, and student commitment to learning (see for example, Abrantes, Seabra, & Lages, 2007; Cornelius-White, 2007). For Mendler (2001), a teacher–student relationship is based on a “personal connection” that ultimately seeks to develop student “academic and social competence” (p. 21). Pascarella and Terenzini’s (1991, 2005) review on the effect of HE on students also provides incontestable evidence that interpersonal relationships are vital for student persistence and learning and suggest they are relevant for student overall success in HE. Similarly, Astin (1993) among others (see for example Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012; Wubbels, den Brok, Van Tartwijk, & Levy, 2012; van Uden, Ritzen, & Pieters, 2014) established a direct correlation between student development and overall success and positive teacher–student relationships. While addressing student–student relationships, the author claimed: “The student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398).

Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) also draw on the work developed by Astin and report teacher–student interactions that extend beyond the classroom are positively correlated with personal growth in the areas of leadership, social activism, and intellectual self-esteem, and academic as well as social self-concept. The authors insist interpersonal relationships have a significant function in mediating student success in HE. Wentzel (1999), for example, discusses the connection between motivation and interpersonal relationships and the repercussions on student academic success. Spencer and Schmelkin (2002) studied students' perceptions on teaching and found that teachers' willingness to interact with them, to accommodate their special needs, to give feedback, perceive when they were having trouble, and know them by name affected students positively, as students associated teacher interaction with a positive teaching experience and with repercussions throughout their lives. Carson (1996) had also suggested that the impact of teacher–student relationships is long lasting. Student engagement increases and becomes meaningful when students perceive that teachers care about them and cater to their individuality (see also Fleming, 2003), without crossing the socially established boundaries.

Drawing on the field of neurosciences, Cozolino and Sprokay (2006) emphasize the need for a close link between learning and interpersonal relationships in educational settings, arguing that human brain needs social interaction to make meaning, to shape and reshape its connections, to adapt and readapt to an ever-changing world. The authors see the brain as a social organ, designed to learn through shared experiences.

Garrison et al. (1999) claim humor and self-disclosure are two examples of emotional expression that bring people together in a community, increasing trust, support, and the sense of belonging. In turn, the sense of belonging appears to have multiple and strong effects on emotion and cognition, as interpersonal attachments are considered essential for human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

At a time when roles are shifting in HE, Schwartz (2011) adverts it is important to, as we have mentioned previously, be aware of the boundaries in these interpersonal relationships, that seem to be getting closer, especially between teachers and students. Schwartz contends that in order to void, what the author calls “the slippery slope” (p. 364), teachers distance themselves from their students, which may refrain the relationship from becoming rich, rewarding, and valuable, increasing the teachers' position of power and failing to foster greater student interpersonal competencies. Schwartz argues teachers need to find the balance to understand when and how the teacher needs to rim the boundaries to serve the student and the relationship. This study revealed that challenging the established boundaries enriches the mutual learning relationship and deepens the potential for the student development.

In HEIs where traditional teaching and learning approaches predominate, interpersonal relationships may be devalued. However, as we have been postulating, HE is about learning and student overall development is the work of HE. If science has proven and validated the connections, establishing the framework for teachers to work with, the option lies in their hands.

3 The Act of Telling Stories

The technological evolution has had a significant impact in educational practices all over the world. Yet, while pedagogical shifts seem slow to process, technological changes and implementations are fast-paced and widespread, perhaps suggesting that in the exponential economic and technological development we are witnessing, human development and other soft elements may have been overlooked.

Stories as a means of making sense of experience have proliferated across many different subject fields, among them, education. If we perceive the idea behind education as the re-contextualization of what has been learned in a continuous process of meaning making, i.e., to learn how to use the knowledge and skills in different contexts throughout life, we posit storytelling is, by far, the best tool humans possess. In this particular field McDrury and Alterio (2003) contend,

Storytelling is uniquely a human experience that enables us to convey, through the language of words, aspects of ourselves and others, and the worlds, real or imagined, that we inhabit. Stories enable us to come to know these worlds and our place in them given that we are all, to some degree, constituted by stories: Stories about ourselves, our families, friends and colleagues, our communities, our cultures, our place in history. (p. 31)

Indeed the art of telling stories, whether orally or in the form of artwork, is one of the oldest methods of communicating ideas and learning (see for example, Bauman, 1986; Koki, 1998; Patterson, 1999). Storytelling persists as an unwavering tradition throughout the world and across different cultures, used to communicate and pass down information to younger generations, to encourage questions, stimulate discussions, and even to explain how one should live. Stories are a means to “socialization and enculturation” (Cruz & Snider, 2009, p. 380). Stories allow for the intersection of perspectives, which, in turn, will foment knowledge negotiation and construction. As Ricoeur states a narrative “construes significant wholes out of scattered events” (as cited by Walker, 1994, p. 296). Stories evoke in all engaging participants unexpected emotions, ideas and ultimately, unexpected selves, shifting perspectives on experience, constructing and deconstructing knowledge.

Traditional storytelling and educational technology can be said to have travelled divergent paths in education. While technology has seeped relentlessly into classrooms of all grade levels, storytelling seems to be imprisoned in lower grade levels (K-4), and the remaining grade levels continue to intently pursue Portuguese and Mathematics with a strict focus on standardized, national assessment. This system pervades HE. However, research has, time and again, demonstrated the connection between storytelling and higher-order thinking skills (Bruner, 1990, 2004; McAdams, 1993, 2001, 2008).

Stories are essential to human communication, learning, and thinking. Sarbin (1986) proposed the “narratory principle: that human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures” (p. 8). This is corroborated by neuroscience and neuroimaging studies, which validate the claims that stories activate brain activity associated with cognitive processes (see for example, Fletcher et al., 1995; Gallagher et al., 2000; Mar, 2004). It is through stories that

experiences gain meaning (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988) and, through reflection and interpretation, is then transformed into knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Schön, 1983). Stories enable the audience to learn by analogy, instead of direct experience (Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano, 2002; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Through storytelling, memory structures are construed (Schank, 1990, 1995) becoming easier to recall than scattered pieces of information.

Schank describes intelligence as the “telling of the right story at the right time in the right way” (1990, p. 241). Storytelling derives from the recollection and interpretation of an experience that has been significant; otherwise it is not remembered (Bruner, 1990; Schank, 1995; Thorndyke, 1977, 1990). It is this dialogic activity in storytelling process that enables learning and thus, human development. Learning occurs when reflection on experience is then transformed into a logical, meaningful story that is shared with others (Clark, 2010; Clark & Rossiter, 2008). This frames learning as a social, experiential, reflective process, integrating the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions that Illeris (2003, 2008) identifies as essential to learning. From the author’s perspective, stories, especially personal stories, motivate and engage the author in the act of creation. To create a coherent and effective story, the author must carefully reflect, select, prioritize, and organize what he/she wants to say and how this can be conveyed. As the story is told, the audience interprets, reflects, and connects to their own personal experience, construing new (mental) stories or reinterpreting older stories, in order to construe new ones. Furthermore, if interaction is possible between author and audience, or amongst the audience this (social) interaction fosters discussion and further reflection. The entire process is mediated by the intervenients’ prior knowledge, their feelings in addition to the social and cultural context.

Despite the perceived value in storytelling, Cooney et al. (1998) have argued that once students reach functional literacy, story is cast aside, and regarded as an informal and recreational practice, not longer an essential skill for students. Pagnucci (2004) also posits while scholars promote the value of story writing, the academy often devalues narrative. This idea expressed by Bendt and Bowe (2000) summarizes what we believe is commonly accepted amongst educators, “Storytelling can ignite the imagination of *children*, giving them a taste for where books can take them. The excitement of storytelling can make reading and learning *fun* and can instill a sense of wonder about life and learning” (our emphasis, p. 1). The authors identify the advantages of storytelling, but associating it to a particular timeframe, when entertainment in education is socially acceptable. This has repercussions on higher levels of education.

Stories, especially personal stories, tend to be subjective and emotional. In fact, what is most significant in storytelling is the premise that most significant learning takes place during or after powerful emotional events (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Whereas some regard the emotion in storytelling as powerful, others deem emotion as a weakness. Crafting a personal story is a highly complex and engaging activity for meaning making that couples cognition and affection, and links the self to others. Stories are used to create consistency, clarification, and coherence of the self, through subjective interpretation. Some

criticize emotional and personal content in HE. However, research has repeatedly demonstrated the emotional content at the core of personal storytelling is connected to intelligence and higher cognition. It is a highly reflexive and recursive process which incorporates the essence of human development, identity, and education. By adding the digital to personal storytelling, we are able to incorporate the technical aspects, which drive the information society we live in.

3.1 *The Digital Storytelling Process*

Digital storytelling is an umbrella to refer to any type of media that assists in the act of telling stories. Authors use ICT tools, which enable the manipulation of digital content—audio, text, or images—to tell stories. Digital stories are the result of this process. Digital storytelling is rapidly proliferating throughout the world perhaps due to its unique characteristics. Digital stories thrive through the Internet, whether in personal webpages and blogs, social networks (such as Facebook), or even specific digital story sites (such as Storify,¹ StoryBook,² Cowbird,³ Animoto,⁴ ComicMaster,⁵ Picture Book Maker,⁶ among others). Thus, there are a wide variety of digital storytelling forms that range from the personal to educational, professional, and interactive entertainment. While some digital stories are video based, others are based on photos and others still on animations. Some are longer, other are shorter. Some are written; others are spoken, while some incorporate multiple media formats. The emergence of new digital technologies has given rise to what Couldry (2008) defined as a transition from mass media toward a more “personal media” (p. 32).

Notwithstanding the widespread use of the concept, not all digital storytelling tells stories based on workshop-format created by the Center for Digital storytelling (CDS). This Californian model (CDS model) best fits our approach and intentions as its emphasis is on *personal voice*, although we recognize it is not the preference in the field of education. Many of the studies in the field of digital storytelling refer to its origins and founders (CDS and Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley and Nina Mullen) but in practice the more personal elements are, very often, overlooked. The CDS model implies a *process* that has a set of recommended elements that are considered essential.

The typical 3-day CDS workshop begins with an introduction to the process, an overview of DS, a script review and development. The main purpose of the first

¹ Available at: <http://storify.com/>

² Available at: <http://www.kerpoof.com/#!/activity/storybook>

³ Available at: <http://cowbird.com/>

⁴ Available at: <http://animoto.com/>

⁵ Available at: <http://www.comicmaster.org.uk/>

⁶ Available at:

<http://www.artisancam.org.uk/flashapps/picturebookmaker/picturebookmaker.php?PHPSESSID=9225166a1ad1eced34b763379f64cdc9>

encounter, which we identify as the Story Circle, is to *listen* deeply to what each individual is *saying* and encourage others to listen. Lambert (2002) acknowledges the highly emotional and spiritual consequences of this first interaction. When there is trust, students will take risks and put themselves into the story in ways that are surprising and highly emotional. It is within this Story Circle that the story begins to take shape. Lambert claims, “one of the hardest, but most important thing to do, is getting started. Because many of the stories ask us to reveal things about ourselves that make us feel vulnerable, putting together a story can be a procrastinator’s paradise” (2002, p. 31). While for some this first is an easy process, for others it proves to be a serious problem. Allocating the technological development of the story to last, DS captures “the human-to-human, face-to-face communication as the central means (p. 17).”

Each individual Digital Story is rooted in the Story Circle, which Lundby (2008), Thumin (2008), and Erstad and Wertsch (2008) claim to be a collaborative process embedded in specific social context, mediated by variety of unstated rules and social relations that bound the story chosen by the student.

After identifying the story, it is necessary to *write* a short, concise half-page tellable⁷ script. For Lambert (2002), 200 words are enough to focus on the essence. The author welcomes metaphors, which translate into economy in terms of time and words. Each memory needs to be considered, planned, prioritized and then organized. The conversion into words becomes critical.

DS places the emphasis on the story although it is important that it is digital given the relevance of technology in today’s society, on self-expression, self-representation, and communication (Lundby, 2008). A Digital Story implies a 2–3-min digital film consisting, in its simplest form, of a voice-over and self-sourced photographs, about a specific moment or event in the person’s life (Lambert, 2002).

Lambert claims Digital Stories should include many, if not all, of the following seven elements: (1) Point (of View); (2) Dramatic Question; (3) Emotional Content; (4) Voice; (5) Soundtrack; (6) Economy; (7) Pacing. These are not meant to be strictly followed, but should be regarded as guides. Although the first three elements should be taken into account when writing the script, it is during production or the creation process that these elements are fine-tuned and linked to create the intended story.

Point of view means the point that is being made, what is being communicated, and the reason behind the story. Additionally, it could refer to the personal interpretation of what was chosen to disclose (directly, in the first person, or through a frame). The story should be tellable, interesting with a **dramatic question**, a plot and not a mere description.

The **personal** and **emotional** elements that derive from the very nature of DS are curiously the most criticized in the literature (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009) and, we

⁷Herman (2009) defines *tellability* as “that which makes an event or configuration of events (relevantly) reportable—that is, tellable or narratable—in a given communicative situation” (p.135). Herman notes that “a given narrative may be a rhetorically effective rendition of reportable events, or it may be only a teller’s halting attempt to make sense of a situation with low tellability.” (p. 34–35)

posit, the key that distinguishes this structured version of **Digital Storytelling** from the more generic digital storytelling. Lambert establishes an undeniable connection between DS and emotion. It is our belief that herein lays the crux of what could be the rehumanization of the world we live in.

For many, the realm of the digital is the most interesting part of the process. Story creators are encouraged to record a personal **voice-over**, given that the process itself establishes a connection between the storyteller and the story, allowing the memories of the event to surface as the story is uttered. Furthermore, voice cadence and style can be used as an additional mean-making element or simply to establish its rhythm (which Lambert refers to as **pacing**). This rhythm can also be conveyed through the **sound track**. Lambert (2002) states that the correct sound track is another mean-making element of the story. It is able to convey feelings, determine the mood of the story, and even change the way the visual components are perceived. It is another layer to the story capable of adding density and intensity and soaking it in emotion. Hull and Nelson (2005) for example comment that music is a pivotal means of expression and identification, especially for youth.

The final element **economy** seems to be the largest problem encountered. Lambert refers to economy, not only in terms of words, but also in the visual elements. The visual components of the story need to be thought out and organized in relation to and interwoven with the other elements and not as an illustration of the other modes of the story. Metaphors can also be applied to the visual layer of the story.

Technically, recoding the voice-over, the sound track and organizing the visual components of the story allow for more than the mere manipulation of audio, image, and video editing tools. With guidance, creators may develop essential media and ICT literacy skills, namely: how to analyze and create media for effective communication and understand the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of Internet content.

The DS process comes to an end when the stories created are **shown**, which we identify as Story Show. In Lambert's perspective, this is the most critical and successful part of the workshop. It is during the Story Show that recognition, learning, and emotional release merge as one. The viewers engage in a meaning-making process when they interpret the multiple layers of the stories. Lambert recognizes the dialogic nature of the stories and cites Birch, when she acknowledges:

A key element of successful storytelling is dialogic. An audience at a storytelling event—as opposed to listening to a prepared speech or play—justly expect their presence to create a singular occasion. The story is not the same story it was when the storyteller practiced it before the concert began. A storyteller needs to acknowledge and adjust to, with some immediacy, the audience's responses, which provide a fresh and limitless source of energy, making each telling of a story a unique event. (as cited in Lambert, 2002, p. 87)

These perspectives corroborate our earlier discussion, contending the specific context and the each individual member of the audience construes the story uniquely based on their own individual tacit knowledge and past experiences. Thus, it is not so much about telling the story, but rather listening to a story at a particular moment, in a specific context, surrounded by a certain audience that impacts interpretation. “Digital Stories are simple but disciplined, like a sonnet or a haiku, and anyone can

learn how to make them” (Hartley, 2008, p. 197), but more important that the actual digital story are the processual perspectives that, similar to a complex network of interwoven realities, are laden with advantages for education in general.

4 The Interconnected Threads of Digital Storytelling

We posit DS is the adhesive force capable of aggregating what research has identified as core. DS is capable of integrating different literacies and language skills, as it combines multimedia researching, production, and presentation skills with more traditional activities like writing and oral production skills. In practice, DS compels students to interpret, organize, prioritize, and make meaning of scattered events. Students are forced to reflect on their relationship with themselves and their relation to others. The preparation and creation phase requires students to search for and collect audio and visual materials, such as images, photos, and sound tracks, to support their story and then combine and organize them in such a way that allows them to create the effect they want. It obliges students to think critically about the meaning and effectiveness of multiple modes (elements) and their combination. This also confronts students with copyright issues on the Web. The narrative function allows students to tell a story with their own voice. Students need to reflect and decide on what to disclose. They are able to record and edit their stories as often as they want before finally presenting them to their teachers and colleagues, thus being able to improve their work until it is to their liking. DS is a personal self-representation, mediated by its limits. Length restrictions foster new ways of thinking, creativity, and imagination. DS is also user-generated media, placing the focus on the student instead of the teacher, giving students leeway to cater to their own individual interests and learning styles, toward a more personalized learning context. This however changes classroom dynamics and relationships, putting a spin in traditional lectured-based HE classrooms.

During the final viewing students may be confronted with positive or negative feedback to their final stories (as for example happens with movies uploaded onto YouTube). This fosters further reflection, interpretation, and meaning making in the author and the audience. The story circle and the story show are about listening, promoting community, trust and closer emotional ties between teacher and student and amongst the students. The content is personal and emotional, and thus empowering, motivating, and engaging. It seems that Digital Storytelling offers more than an opportunity to incorporate technology. As a process, Digital Storytelling demonstrates the capacity to aggregate the essence of HE: human (personal) development, social relational development, and technology.

DS is not just about creating digital stories; the foundations are embedded in story *telling*, in the act of sharing. DS in education can foster closer interpersonal connections based on trust, affection, and dialogue. The act of sharing begins in the Story Circle and continues through the Story Show. Significant cognitive development takes place in the interpersonal interactions prior to and after the act of creating the final story where self-reflection is the stepping-stone to dialogue,

as advocated by the literature. This process fosters opportunities to connect and deepen relationships between students and teachers and amongst students. On the other hand, for students to talk about what is socially perceived as private is hard because they are afraid to be criticized. Students, like everybody else, worry about what impression they make on others and each element of the story is carefully selected and organized to disclose what they want. The DS process enables students to undergo a process of self-reflection on who they are and what they wanted to show, whether they then disclosed their thought or not.

Additionally, DS is emotional, sometimes upsetting because it focuses on issues presented from a personal perspective. Emotional and personal content is the precise focal point for criticism in DS, as society often cultivates the notion that the personal myth is too selfish, placing the self above society. McAdams (1993) argues, crafting personal stories is an “ongoing act of psychological and social responsibility” (p. 35) not selfishness. However, older people in particular have often been discouraged to talk openly about their personal lives, an idea that is still passed down to other generations. In today’s society, emotional health cannot be viewed as secondary, but as essential to the twenty-first century student as the other persistently identified skills. While research on reflective teaching and emotional intelligence is abundant, the truth is that it remains a challenge to bring this practice into HE classroom.

The shift to personal perspective from which emotion stems is associated with higher-order cognition, positive student development and personalized, closer and less formal learning. Moreover and connected to emotion and self-disclosure, interpersonal relationships influence have significant impact not only at the personal level, but also on the academic and the professional realms as well. However, we would like to assert that while these three perspectives are intertwined and cannot be dissociated, our practical experience as teachers has demonstrated, the *personal* is still seen as unessential and even uncalled for in HE by teachers and students alike. Students are understandably reluctant to talk about themselves and what they perceive to be as private, too personal and emotionally laden content and not belonging to the field of academia. Teachers seem to have the same opinion, admitting that there is an invisible boundary that is not crossed unless students volunteer the more personal details. This raises the question of what is considered appropriate in HE, what is perceived as private, and what is considered public.

The largest obstacle in incorporating DS in HE seems to be getting teachers to recognize its value, to recognize that student reflection and expression of emotion enriches the learning process. Teachers need to acknowledge the alignment between DS and the intended learning outcomes in HE: DS encourages student inquiry, deeper analysis, critical thinking skills, visual literacy skills, visual and oral communication, teamwork, global and civic knowledge, as well as personal development—the rooted intentions of HE.

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Sandra P.M. Ribeiro Sandra Ribeiro is a lecturer at the School of Accounting and Administration of Oporto (ISCAP), in the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (IPP), since the year 2000 in the area of Languages and Cultures. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Aveiro in Digital Storytelling in Higher Education. She is a member of *Centro de Estudos Interculturais* and a member of the Centre for Research in Communication and Education (CICE) at ISCAP. Her research interests, besides Digital Storytelling as a pedagogical practice, include subthemes such as identity, self-representation, interpersonal relationships, and technologies in higher education.

António A.F.G. Moreira António Moreira holds a Ph.D. in Foreign Languages Teaching Methodologies and his research interests include e-Learning, Web 2.0 tools and services and Cognitive Flexibility Theory and its applications in education and training. He is, at present, the Head of the Department of Education, at the University of Aveiro, Portugal.

Cristina M.F. Pinto da Silva Christina Pinto da Silva is a Professor in the School of Accounting and Administration in Oporto.

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