Adult Education Research Conference   2010 Conference Proceedings (Sacramento, CA)

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Recommended Citation

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Abstract: *Interest in digital storytelling in a multitude of settings has burgeoned in recent years. Although digital storytelling is not new in the world of educational technology, so far it has received little attention in the literature of adult learning. Our aim in this paper is to explore elements of a conceptual framework for the use of digital storytelling in adult education.*

Digital Storytelling – An Introduction

Most simply, the term digital storytelling refers to the use of digital technology to tell a story. While there are a number of still-emerging definitions of digital storytelling, we believe the following explanation from the KQED Digital Storytelling Project captures the key elements:

Digital storytelling is the manifestation of the ancient art of storytelling. . . . [it] uses digital media to create visual stories to show, share, and in the process, preserve as history. Digital stories derive their impact by weaving together images, music, narrative and voice to give depth and dimension to the narrative. By using the Internet and other forms of digital distribution, digital stories can be seen across distances and boundaries to create new communities through a sense of shared meaning (2008).

A growing body of literature has explored the ways in which digital stories enhance learning, build community, and much more. Educators in the K-12 educational system are using digital storytelling at all levels to help students develop writing, presentation, organization, and problem-solving skills (e.g., Kulla-Abbott and Polman, 2008; Sadik, 2008). Perhaps more relevant to adult education, digital storytelling is being employed in a variety of community education and social action programs, and is proving a powerful tool through which marginalized populations find voice. For example, the Silence Speaks site gives survivors of domestic violence the opportunity to share their stories as a means of prevention (McLellan, 2006). Public Health advocates worked with Storybuilders to create digital stories seeking to deal with maternal depression among the Cambodian population of a nearby community (storybuilders.org). Higher education has also been caught up in the promise of digital storytelling. Digital stories have been proposed as alternatives to the traditional term paper (Burkholder and Cross, 2009). In her Latina Life Stories course at California State University at Monterey Bay, Benmayor engages students in the production of their unique individual testimonios in multimedia format (2008). These are but a few examples of how educators are finding in digital storytelling an empowering tool to facilitate learning and change.

Digital Storytelling – Current Conceptual Configurations

Studies of digital storytelling in the K-12 setting indicate that it tends to focus on skill development. Robin (2008) identifies the need for a "better theoretical framework" for the educational application of digital storytelling. He contends that in practice, both in K-12 and higher education, the emphasis in using digital storytelling has been on the technology, without sufficient attention to how the technology relates to the subject matter, teaching strategies, or

student needs. In Robin's view (2008) digital storytelling in K-12 education reflects the convergence of the availability and affordability of technology with an increasing emphasis on multi-media and multiple-literacy skills for today's students. He outlines seven elements that together define the educational uses of digital storytelling. Four of those elements identify the hardware and software that make digital stories possible: (a) Computers with multimedia capability; (b) Image capture devices, including digital cameras and scanners; (c) Audio capture devices; and (d) Digital media software for editing digital images, audio and video. These technical advances have converged with three key educational priorities: (a) Promoting "21st Century Skills" for students; (b) Engaging students and teachers through personally meaningful knowledge construction; and (c) Encompassing multiple literacy skills. Together these seven factors support the burgeoning educational applications of digital storytelling. Robin goes on to suggest the use of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK), which explicates the interactions among an educator's knowledge of content, pedagogy, and technology, as a conceptual framework to guide the educational use of digital storytelling.

Barrett's work has explored the uses of digital storytelling primarily in relation to electronic portfolios. She sees digital storytelling at the center of four learning strategies: (a) reflection for deep learning; (b) project-based learning; (c) technology integration; and (d) student engagement (2007). Drawing upon a narrative approach to e-portfolio development as a tool for deep learning, Barrett has identified three clusters of purposes for the uses of digital stories in electronic portfolios. They are: Introduction of Self, including voice, biography, memoir; Reflection, including transition, benchmarking development and change; and Multimedia Artifacts (2008).

The work of Joe Lambert of the Center for Digital Storytelling offers yet another view of digital storytelling. Lambert (2010) outlines seven steps of digital story creation. While they are framed as sequential steps, they point to key conceptual components in digital storytelling. The first three steps—Owning Your Insights; Owning Your Emotions; Finding the Moment—speak to the self awareness and reflection that attend any life story. As such, they strike a familiar chord with adult educators. In reference to the first step, Lambert comments, "Finding and clarifying stories helps people to understand the context of their lives. This process of self-reflection helps move from an awareness of "I am" to a deeper awareness of 'I have been … I am becoming … I am … and I will be….'" (p. 10). This conceptualization clearly involves processes of development and change that figure prominently in adult learning.

The second step puts the spotlight on the emotional dimension of learning through personal narratives. His idea is that being in touch with the complexity of emotion associated with the story gives the storyteller a level of authenticity with the audience, a notion similar to that expressed by Rossiter and Clark (2007) in their commentary on the emotionality of story sharing in the adult classroom. The attention to emotion resonates also with recent discussions of the holistic nature of adult learning involving body, mind, spirit, emotions, and context (Merriam, 2008). The third step, Finding the Moment, is the step that moves an insight from a general reflection to a story. Lambert encourages storytellers to locate a pivotal episode or turning point around which to frame a story. Such questions as: "What was the moment when things changed? Were you aware of it at the time?" (Lambert, 2010, p. 13) help the digital storyteller to find the focus for the story.

The last four steps in Lambert's (2010) model focus on the multimedia elements of digital storytelling—Seeing Your Story; Hearing Your Story; Assembling Your Story; and Sharing Your Story. In reference to the fouth step, Lambert notes that digital stories rely on

images—either still or moving—and the storyteller must be continually cognizant of both the explicit and implicit images as they refine the message of the story. In effect, there are two narratives in a digital story—the overt narrative heard in the voice-over, and the covert narrative perceived by the viewer from the images. The two must act in accord. Lambert's fifth step, Hearing Your Story, includes the aural elements in a digital story— the narrated voice-over, background music, and special sound effects. Here it is important to understand that digital storytelling differs from conventional oral storytelling in that it results in a final presentation of the story, rather than remaining open to revision in each telling. Therefore, the fluidity of the narrative as it is produced is supremely important.

In the sixth step, Assembling Your Story, Lambert (2010) emphasizes the importance of the storyboarding process and brevity. His suggestion of "a word count of 250 – 375, and fewer than twenty images…" (p. 21) may seem restrictive, but it requires absolute focus on the purpose of the story which strengthens the story. The final step is Sharing Your Story. It is important for digital storytellers to consider the questions that Lambert (p. 22) suggests: "Who is your audience? What was your purpose in creating the story? . . . And what life will the story have after it's completed?"

In sum, the literature of digital storytelling includes several conceptual configurations and more are emerging as digital storytelling is increasingly studied. However, the digital storytelling literature has not substantively addressed the narrative underpinnings of digital storytelling in education. Further, these conceptions do not incorporate elements of adult learning theory.

Digital Storytelling in Adult Education

What, then, can we say about digital storytelling in adult education? We believe that a conceptual framework begins to emerge at the confluence of key concepts from adult learning, narrative learning, and digital storytelling. We see that just as narrative learning is one perspective within adult education, digital storytelling is one method within narrative education that incorporates educational technology. In the sections below, we discuss three foundational concepts from adult education that can be viewed through the narrative lens, and, tightening the focus a bit, through the lens of digital storytelling.

Lived Experience

Since the earliest formulations of adult learning theory, the role of the adult's lived experience has been foundational. Lindeman (1961) proclaimed that life experience is, indeed, the adult learner's "living textbook" (p. 121). And, one of the key assumptions of andragogy is that the adult's accumulated experience is a key resource in the learning endeavor (Knowles, 1970). Since Knowles's original conception of andragogy, a number of models of experience-based learning have been proposed (e.g., Kolb, 1984; Boud and Walker, 1991). More recently, the work of Fenwick (2004) has expanded our understanding of the role of the learner's experience.

The narrative orientation to adult learning is experience-based, but it differs from other views of experiential learning in that it begins with the assumption that making meaning from experience is a narrative process. A good deal has been written in recent years about narrative and autobiographical methods in adult education (e.g., Karpiak, 2000; Dominice, 2000; Rossiter and Clark, 2010, forthcoming). Three general areas of narrative application in adult teaching and

learning are: (a) the use of stories in the classroom to illustrate and underscore particular content points; (b) 'storying' the curriculum, i.e., constructing a curricular narrative; and (c) autobiographical learning, i.e., learning through one's own stories of lived experience (Rossiter and Clark, 2007). A narrative orientation to teaching and learning involves an understanding of the human narrative impulse as integral to meaning making, identity formation, and learning. Learning itself is conceptualized as a narrative process in which the learner strives to construct new narratives of meaning that encompass new content information (Clark and Rossiter, 2008).

Whatever else it may be, digital storytelling is a narrative method of facilitating adult learning. In other words, it is not merely another technology tool. This understanding carries epistemological, process, and outcome implications. Narrative implies a way of knowing that is constructive, contextual, and interpretive. Because narrative knowing is a fundamental human capacity, it should not be shuffled to the sidelines of education, or considered merely an add-on to 'real' knowledge. It is, in its own right, increasingly recognized as an essential capacity. Pink (2006), for example, suggests that we are moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age. Storytelling, meaning-making, big-picture thinking, and pattern-recognition – all closely aligned with narrative knowing – are among the capacities that will be essential in this new age and that can be developed through digital storytelling.

Self-Direction

A second idea that has endured throughout the development of adult learning theory is the idea of self-direction. Although andragogy has been criticized, questioned, and expanded upon over the last three decades, its basic assumptions continue to serve as guiding principles for practice in the field (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007). Key among them is a belief in the adult learner's capacity for self-direction. Self-directed learning as a process, the autonomy of the adult learner, and the relationship between the two, have commanded a good deal of attention in the literature of the field in the last four decades. While many questions remain, there is little argument that the potential for self-directedness is a consideration in working with adult learners.

In narrative approaches to adult education, the inclination toward self-direction among adult learners takes on the flavor of self-authorship. McAdams (1996) suggests that our identity is itself a story, ever unfolding and developing throughout life. We are both the main character and the author of the story of our lives. This is a profoundly empowering idea—that we are not merely the victims of circumstance, but rather we are the decision makers whose right and responsibility it is to claim and make meaning of those circumstances. Narrative educational methods such as autobiographical writing, story-sharing, and experience-based learning activities offer opportunities for adult learners to take self-directed learning to the level of self-authorship.

Narrative learning through digital storytelling moves to yet another level of self-definition. In the creation of a digital story, the learning engages not only in self-direction and self-authorship, but also in self-presentation. As Hull and Katz (2006) explain, digital storytelling involves a performative element of self development and self definition. They comment on Urciuoli's "notion of perfomative moments as potent opportunities for self-fashioning" noting that her definition of performative moments "situates self-construction more collectively, as part of an activity that creates solidarity among a group of people and decreases an individual's sense of self as autonomous or isolated. It also calls attention to the power of public performance in generating especially intense moments of self-enactment" (p. 47). The point is that digital storytelling offers learners an opportunity to present/enact a sense of self in a

way that goes beyond the notion of self-directed learning and even beyond the individual self-authorship of narrative learning. Related to the performative element of digital storytelling is the concept of the "director's chair effect" (Banaszewski, 2005, cited by Robin, 2008). This notion takes self-direction to an entirely new level. As Robin explains, digital storytelling offers an opportunity for multimedia self expression and the ability to be the director of one's own movie, both of which are highly engaging and empowering for students.

Voice

Another concept close to the core of adult education is that of voice. Hayes (2000), for example, explained three different ways to think of the idea of voice in relation to women's learning—voice as talk, voice as identity, and voice as power. We know that experience-based narrative education in general, and autobiographical learning in particular, offers opportunities for adult learners to find their voice at multiple levels through the expression of their learning stories.

The idea of voice takes on a special meaning in digital storytelling. One of the distinguishing features of digital stories is the inclusion of one's own physical voice in the story. While this may sound obvious, in fact, we believe it is not to be underestimated. Lambert (2007) notes that one's own voice is a key component of a digital story, even though some people wish to produce a digital story with a musical soundtrack but without narration in their own voice. Although hearing the sound of one's own voice is uncomfortable for some people, according to Lambert, using one's actual voice is an important part of the digital storytelling process. He says, "Truly, our voice is a great gift. Those of us fortunate enough to be able to talk out loud should love our voices, because they tell everyone so much about who we are, both how strong we can be and how fragile" (p. 16). It is true–our voices do reveal much about who we are. Perhaps that is why hearing one's own voice is often an unsettling experience.

A second—and critical—consideration related to the concept of voice in digital storytelling has to do with the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on personal experience narratives. In a word, the internet serves as a powerful potential amplifier for the voice of individuals and groups. The fact is that through Web 2.0 technologies, digital stories can be shared— intentionally or not—with an audience of thousands or millions. This potential has yet to be fully explored and understood. Clearly, it brings a new dimension to stories in adult education that must be considered.

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