

Visualising and Performing Character and Citizenship through Digital Storytelling

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With Input from Andrew Pereira and Prudence E. Wales

KEY IMPLICATIONS

- Digital storytelling is a platform and context for personal expression and self-discovery, but overly didactic and technical approaches often restrict students' choices and creativity.
- When aptly designed and enacted, digital storytelling forges strong and intimate links between a story and the storyteller.
- As a pedagogy, digital storytelling requires teachers to create and manage an open and safe learning environment that allows trust and honesty in interpersonal relationships to grow.

BACKGROUND

Experience shows that in some character and citizenship education (CCE) classes, students may not engage with certain issues because they are not comfortable with emotive and personal topics, or they do not know the "correct" responses. One way to open up talk in CCE is through drama conventions (Bowell & Heap, 2013) and digital storytelling (e.g., Lambert, 2013).

FOCUS OF STUDY

To evoke deeper learning and the discovery of moral values in students (Gardner, 2006), the study explores storytelling and teacher-student, student-student learning partnerships in and through the digital arts.

KEY FINDINGS

- Digital storytelling is never linear, sequential or predictable but when aptly designed it can forge strong and intimate links between a story and the storyteller.
- Although not always eloquent or neatly articulate in their explanations, lower secondary students can design and produce subtle and nuanced stories about character and citizenship with little or no direct instruction. As a result, their confidence levels can rise and their perceptions of their surroundings become more nuanced and reflective.
- Teachers and arts professionals tend to view the purposes of digital storytelling differently. However, fixed structures and a lack of openness to various outcomes tend to stifle students' creativity and restrict teachers' reflexivity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

Implications for practice

Teachers' professionalism grows as they acquire and hone their own identities as educators. One way to do this is by designing situated and responsive digital storytelling tasks that respect their students' viewpoints and opinions. This requires rethinking how positional authority operates in classrooms.

Implications for policy and research

In terms of developing literacy skills, it is necessary and vitally important to move beyond telling through written and spoken words towards non-linguistic forms of thought and expression including drama.

Learning gains

Making and telling digital stories about character and citizenship is not as straightforward as it may appear. In particular, what and how students learn depend on the tools and materials they have on hand or we allow them to use. However, when necessary, students can be extremely creative in working around technological constraints and solving content-related problems through composition and editing.

Proposed Follow-up Activities

We need further research to describe and explain how teachers can use new media (especially digital storytelling) to teach, reflect and grow professionally alongside their students.

PARTICIPANTS

The authors worked in one secondary school in Singapore with two CCE teachers and approximately 65 Secondary One students over two years.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study involved descriptive and exploratory case studies based on teachers and students' digital stories and interviews, and their actions in specific social situations.

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