



USING STORYTELLING IN EDUCATION

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Introduction

Storytelling is a means of expressing experiences, emotions and ideas in different forms of transfer and dating back to ancient times. Despite all the modern innovations, the attraction of the art of storytelling has not really been lost, particularly, in the field of education where it still carries a major importance. This method, which has become a developed tool in imparting ideas and skills with the aid of the mass media, has become significant in all areas of studies.

Storytelling as a Concept

Storytelling is the art of portraying real or fictitious events in words, images, and sounds. Stories are told for entertainment purposes, and often to teach lessons and provide morals. Storytelling is often considered to be a crucial aspect of humanity. Human beings have a natural ability to use verbal

communication to teach, explain, and entertain, which is why storytelling is so prevalent in everyday life. Anne Pellowski, in her attempt to draft an acceptable definition of storytelling, says that,

“storytelling is the art or craft of narration of stories in verse and/or prose, as performed or led by one person before a live audience; the stories narrated may be spoken, chanted, or sung, with or without musical, pictorial, and/or other accompaniment and may be learned from oral, printed, or mechanically recorded sources; one of its purpose may be that of entertainment.” (World of Storytelling, 15)

The National Storytelling Association came up with a working definition of storytelling which states that, “Storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience” (NSA, 1997). It further adds that a central, unique aspect of storytelling is its reliance on the audience to develop specific visual imagery and detail to complete and co-create the story. The teller’s role is to prepare and present the necessary language, vocalization, and physicality to effectively and efficiently communicate the images of the story.

Background to Storytelling

The art of storytelling was passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth in a rich variety of ways. Our ancestors handed down their experiences, exploits, customs and traditions to the succeeding generation by way of oral narration, which served as the basic foundation of storytelling. Folktales and fables are among those of the oldest forms by which cultural values, beliefs and wisdom have become inculcated in us today. Storytelling tradition dates back to the time before written sources came into being. This tradition which came into being during Homers (Homerous) era covers the eastern legends such as Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Arabian Nights: a Thousand Nights and a Night, The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor, Nasreddin Hodcha Dede Korkut Stories and Meddah stories. (Dede, 2005)

The youngest forms of storytelling were oral, combined with gesture and expression: words were spoken from one person to another in an effort to communicate a message or a feeling. Stories are also seen in the artwork scratched onto the walls of caves. With the invention of writing, stories were recorded, transcribed and shared over wide regions of the world, such that today, the medium most commonly-associated with storytelling is the novel. As human activities have become more refined and complex, visual stories have been presented in images carved into wood, ivory or stone, painted on canvas, recorded on film and stored electronically as digital images.

It is said that even before the dawn of civilization, primitive hunters would gather around the fire at the end of the day and tell each other stories, captivating their audience with tales of their adventures in hunting and in search of food. This end-of the day gathering became an established routine for our ancestors; thus, the storyteller was looked upon as a valuable figure in those days. Indeed, listening to stories can be a vivid, creative experience. As he listens, the listener, through his mind's eye, visualizes the story as it unfolds and even long after the narration is over. Using the magic of language and the storyteller's flair for weaving the events, the story can become real and the listener becomes participatory as he creates and re-creates the magical scenes of colorful landscapes and fascinating people.

The storytellers share some values with the listeners. and in this way they have a very good relationship with each other. To elucidate the point, Oskay said, "The story teller may mix some local expressions, or omit, or make a up new expressions. In this way, he increases intercommunication". Oskay explained that the topics of these stories included, the resistance of the society against super natural forces, and the emotional aspects of coping with them, or the traditions which helped to negotiate terms with them, and at the same time, the stories describe generally how the society as a whole resists against super natural forces. As he did this, he took the values of the whole societv as a basis. and he explained the

world and human beings using these traditions, he also added that people had to lead their lives without elucidating these traditions (Oskay, 2000).

Using Storytelling for Educational Purposes: Traditional versus Modern

In traditional social culture, stories weren't only (addressed) to a few people but to a large audience (Güney, 1971). The stories included heroic acts, and legends which united people (Karweik, 1999). They expressed stories about today, yesterday and tomorrow and expressed realities powerfully and thus they explained how a person perceived the outside world. According to Riesman, from the era of Homeros to our present time, people who listen to these stories and people who live in similar places become one.

Long before modern media entertained us storytelling was a common pastime, and a good storyteller was a valuable attribute to the community. Folktales and fables are one of the oldest educational tools through which cultures have passed down values and lore from one generation to the next.

In contrary to traditional one, modern storytelling usually only attempts to entertain. However, the use of storytelling as a teaching tool is "built into" learning pedagogy and methodology and thus it only requires a slighter-emphasis from the entertainment-only mode. Therefore, storytelling can be an extremely important resource for modern educator. Storytelling is normally considered a "traditional" resource and usually gets used half-heartedly by the teaching staff.

Storytelling is unique as an educational resource in that the it can range from the purely traditional to the most technologically modern. Storytelling has the unique capability of letting the students interact as listeners or as storytellers themselves. In both cases storytelling promotes increasing student skills in listening, reading and comprehension. Students participate in the oral presentations of the stories themselves. Stories essentially are dramatic activities which encompass the non-verbal communication of body language, gestures and facial



expressions. Therefore, the students absorb these elements mostly without their being an item of specific focus. And best of all, the students enjoy the activity.

Traditional storytelling differs from multi-media storytelling, in that it is experienced, and forms within the mind of the audience. For example, a described dragon will be different for each audience member, while a visual representation will be more specific. Since traditional storytelling relies on the recipient's personal experience and imagination, it tends to be stronger in impact.

Storytelling provides students with a sense of history, experiences of listening and turn-taking, a sense of community, the ability to imagine, listening, an understanding of characters and how to give them shape and shading, a knowledge of sequencing and story structure, giving a sense of writing techniques, a sensitivity to oral language and its importance to culture, a connection between language and meaning, a sense of how stories have layers of meaning, a realization of how stories change with different audiences knowledge of how the teller and audience co-compose the story, a sense of their bodies in space and how others use space, movement, voice and character, chance to shape their own learnings-when they are allowed to choose their own story and keep track of what skills they are learning or what is difficult for them in the act of telling and then to seek the kind of help that fits.

Digital Storytelling

Properly designed, a technology-based learning environment provides students with more options than are typically available in traditional learning situations. Media have been used with more traditional delivery methods (lectures, tutorials) to support essential teaching objectives, such as clarifying and illustrating complex subjects, adapting to individual learning styles, improving retention and aiding and recall and finally reaching nonverbal learners. One of these delivery methods is known as storytelling. Today, in technology enhanced learning and teaching environments, storytelling is supported by various multimedia tools that are embedded in the

learning channel in visual, auditory and kinesthetic formats. Adding such aids makes a story become more mediated and digitized through which it becomes richer in content and application. The action referred to as the delivery of the story is known as "Digital(ly) (Story) Telling".

Digital Storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Digital stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid color to characters, situations, experiences, and insights. In addition to this, digital storytelling provides rich "teachable moments" in regards to helping students become media literate.

Many different software programs are available that support Digital Storytelling. Here you will find information about tools that will help you find images and audio clips, modify your own images, record and edit audio, and put all of these materials together in a finished Digital Story. A variety of different software applications are available that can be used in the creation of digital stories. In addition to high-end applications such as Macromedia Flash and Adobe Premiere, two high-end, not to mention, expensive software programs that are suitable for developing Digital Stories that can include a wide range of media types, there are many other less expensive, and more user-friendly applications that educators and their students can use to create high-quality Digital Stories. Many such software options may be obtained for free or for a relatively inexpensive cost, while several excellent tools come integrated into popular computer operating systems and may already be available to those with access to a current model Windows PC or Apple Macintosh.

Conclusion

Story telling is a means, of creative expressions which are still important nowadays. By using this method, educational subjects can be taught, transferred and developed. Through mass media, story telling is being done in a variety of ways. It has no limits because it is applicable to every branch of science with interactive tools. Changing roles and ways of interaction in storytelling through various

media introduce a new scope of understanding and use of that art.

No matter how we tell our stories, it is the content of the message conveyed through different channels and forms which counts.

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