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Local History Archives: Digital Storytelling as a Public History Re-Narration Tool

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Abstract
The subject matter of this paper is the junction between Digital Storytelling and Public History. Contemporary theories of Digital Storytelling, along with its educational exploitation, are briefly examined and presented. Specifically, reference is made to Digital Storytelling as well as to its relationship with Education, Creative Writing, and the utilization of modern technological means, offered by Information and Communication Technologies. Moreover, the teaching of Local History in Primary Education is also examined. The learning theory of Constructivism, which is related to the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies in the specific teaching intervention (educational scenario) and in education in general, is analyzed and utilized. The main objective of the research is to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of teachers regarding the use of Digital Storytelling in education and propose a didactic utilization of their local archives in order to reconstruct and narrate a story they will later be able to teach to the students. On-site research was carried out to collect material that could be exploited as educational material and to compose an original interdisciplinary lesson. An educational scenario was created, involving different subjects. Archival material and Digital Storytelling have been utilized as a means of re narrating Public History. The archive material emerged was used not only as a teaching material for the educational scenario, but also as a material that generally compiles a story that has something to teach children and that has the potential to be presented digitally, as a means of Digital Storytelling.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Information and Communication Technologies, Archive Ethnography, Archive Material, General State Archives, Local History, Public History

Introduction

Storytelling is one of the oldest methods of human communication and learing. (Kotopoulos 2012, Ksesternou 2013). Digital storytelling is the combination of traditional, oral narration with multimedia and communication tools (Lathem 2005). Additionally, it constitutes an art form that combines multimedia material to create a story (Rammos, Bratitsis 2017). With its assistance, students are able to classify their experiences, comprehend deeper meanings, and eventually learn through discovery (Bratitsis, 2015). In essence, a short narrative that usually takes the form of a personal story, told in the first person, presented as a short movie for display on screen (Roumeliotou Kirmanidou, Moisides, Foutsitzis, 2011).

History, Folklore and Anthropology are all linked to Archival Ethnography. (Varvounis, Kapaniaris, 2019). According to Karen F. Gracy (2006), archival ethnography is a form of naturalistic inquiry (falling within the broader field of qualitative research) positions the researcher within an archival environment, composed of document creators, document users and archivists, in order to gain the cultural perspective of those responsible for the creation, collection, care, and use of records.

In a research of archival material (whether historical or not), it is possible to study files with real objects (images, brochures, manuscripts, objects, publications, etc.). In contemporary years, it is also possible to study digital archives using the means and tools provided by Information and Communication Technologies. Besides, primary research in archives and evidence, aiming to the production of an ethnography, can also be done directly in digital evidence and not necessarily in the originals (Varvounis, Kapaniaris, 2019).

The archives of a body or people coming from a specific place, testify a lot about the time

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they refer to and not only form part of the history of this place, but they constitute and compose its actual history. In terms of education, the archives are live, can provide a lot of information and can be used as a teaching material in the context of a thematic approach, which can include and combine different disciplines.

Some of the cognitive areas involved, which are related to courses taught in Primary Education, are Environmental Studies, Geography, Language, ICT, Visual Arts and more. Once the archives are identified and the archive material is linked to the educational scenario, a teaching intervention will be created as part of the Flexible Zone lesson. This teaching intervention will be viewed, judged, and evaluated by primary education teachers.

The archives of the General State Archives of Messolonghi are exemplified and converted into educational material to compose an educational scenario that will focus on a topic and examine it in a multifaceted and multidisciplinary way.

The essay essentially discusses the creation of a teaching intervention that can actively combine Digital Storytelling with education and the use of Information and Communication Technologies. It also examines, in a subsequent stage, the extent to which Digital Storytelling can serve as a tool for re-narrating Public History, and how useful and effective it can be for the teachers and the educational process itself.

The pure research part lays on the investigation of teachers' attitudes to such interventions, through the use of a created teaching scenario (cross- thematic guided project), in combination with the use of Digital Storytelling , which are based on the contents of public records files. The attitudes and perceptions of teachers regarding the use of Digital Storytelling in education are probed as well as, the proposition of a didactic utilization of their local archives in order to reconstruct and narrate a story they will later be able to teach to the students.

The content of the research archives in the General State Archives (G.S.A.) of Aitoloakarnania Prefecture in Greece

Below presented is an on-site research in public archives that would be used as "raw material", that is, content to design a teaching intervention and would eventually lead to Digital Storytelling. In this research (research for material on-site/ on-site research) conducted in the archives of General State Archives concerning the issue of salt production in the salt marshes of Messolonghi, the following files were detected that could be useful in order to compose the educational material for creating a teaching intervention. The information collected through these files is numerous and provides many possibilities to the researcher who wants to exploit it. In particular, files detected were related to:

- Studies on Messolonghi Salts (K.S. Stasinopoulos: The Salt and Salt Marshes of Messolonghi, 1905).
- Memorandum by H.C.of Messolonghi to Papagos and Markezinis (1953) concerning the salt marshes of Tourlida.
- Preliminary study on the operation of the salt marshes of Messolonghi as a municipal enterprise (manuscript, 1982).
- Environmental impact study (on behalf of Kalamarakis).
- Budget-toll of the costs for the cultivation of the salt

marsh of Tourlida, Messolonghi (1982, the Office of the Salt Marsh).
- Employment contracts and contract terminations regarding the year 1985.
- Requests to the Ministry of National Economy, Industry, Energy and Natural Resources, concerning salt, its sale and exploitation (1985).
- Newspaper archives of that time referring to the salt marshes works and their importance (National Echo, Free World).
- Auction announcement regarding the sale of salt by the Municipal Enterprise of Tourdila, Messolonghi salt marshes.
- Informative memorandum by the Municipal Enterprise of Tourdila, Messolonghi with attached material concerning the history of the salt marshes, financial and personnel information.\
- Documentary Evidence
- Works contracts.

Educational Scenario

Title of the Educational Scenario "Salt production in the salt marshes of Messolonghi: Study through the records of the salt marshes of Tourlida also known as" Black Salt Marsh".

Cognitive Areas Involved: Environmental Studies, Geography, Language, ICT, Visual Arts.

Educational Stage: Primary Education

Grade: 5th-6th grade of Elementary School

Estimated Duration: 12 hours

The purpose of the educational scenario is to present all the aspects of a production activity (nature, sustainability, economy, production, local product, cultivation and extraction) during the salt production process through the archives (research, archive) of the General State Archives of Messolonghi, of the Municipal Salt Enterprise of Tourlida (Black Salt Marsh).

Students' Prerequisite Knowledge

Students should already possess basic computer skills. In particular they should be able to edit and save texts and files, and use the browser (software that allows the user to view and simultaneously interact with texts, music, images, games, videos and other information, which are usually posted on a web site on the World Wide Web or even on a local network).

Educational material/applications/software

In order for the educational scenario to be implemented, the internet will need to be used by the students to find material that they deem useful in collecting information, files, videos and images related to the subject.

Required means/ equipment

In order for the educational scenario to be implemented, a computer lab is needed from which students will have access the internet. A video projector will also be needed on which the archive material from the research conducted in the General State Archives, as well as the Digital History that has emerged from this material and related slides to the subject will be presented. Students will work in groups of 3-4 on each computer.

The innovation of the research

The innovation of this research lays on the following:

In order to produce the Digital Storytelling and the Educational Scenario, alongside the main research, other

actions were performed in the form of field and archival research. This interlaid research involved in essence collecting and recording archival material in order to transform it into a learning material, aiming to the creation of the Educational Scenario.

The teaching interventions created were based on the learning model of constructivism. In particular, concerning the teaching strategy, the project-based learning method and the discovery / inquiry-based learning method were utilized and combined.

The Educational Scenario for the interdisciplinary guided project facilitates the learning process and can help teachers not only manage to converse with a file, but also teach a lesson they have created themselves, utilizing modern technological means and tools, embracing modern pedagogical theories and strategies.

The re-narration of Public History, seen under a contemporary visual perspective of things and utilizing modern technological means and tools, can be transformed into a pleasurable exploration both for students and teachers. Thus, it can be transformed from a blatant mere listing of facts and dates, into an exploratory and interactive process, that has the potential to incorporate all these necessary elements that can make it effective for the educational process.

The role that Digital Storytelling can play in serving the purposes of History is deemed rather important. Digital Storytelling, acting as a catalyst, is perhaps the key to the constructive combination of Local and Public History with archival material. History itself, utilizing its sources, reconstructs and redefines its story.

In order to re-narrate this story, the teacher uses the archive as a source of information and, after extracting what he / she needs, creates a story (which may involve many different disciplines) and presents it digitally to students.

The innovation of the whole project, therefore, lays on the different approach and perspective it has to offer, as well as on the constructive result of the archive's combination with Local History and Digital Storytelling. The world of archives is a world that goes hand in hand with yesterday and today and human society, a world probably born out of that need of recording. Thus, conversing with a file is not an easy process, let alone creating an entire lesson based on this conversation and associate it with society, the economy, the geography or even the environment of a place.

The archives are the living proof that History is written every day through the simplest things of everyday life that tend to go unnoticed even during the time in which they take place or later, until the exploratory eye of the historian can collect, classify, analyze and finally understand them, conversing with them, listening to the truths they bear witness to.

Teachers can organize a collaborative Local History research that will be conducted jointly with students, as part of a collaborative process. When presenting the research results, they can create a Digital Storytelling and actively involve their students in the exploratory process and in its creative recording and presentation. They can also research beyond their own archives and digital archives of modern multimedia and information society, utilizing the means and tools provided by Information and Communication Technologies.

Aim and Objective of the research

The purpose of the research is to examine the prevailing perceptions of teachers regarding the use of Digital Storytelling throughout the educational process. The attitudes and perceptions of teachers will be explored, while put under examination is the inquiry whether Digital Storytelling is an effective educational tool for re-narrating Public History and whether it can be used by teachers. Finally, the purpose of the research is to examine whether teachers themselves will have a positive perception of a guided scenario whose material is derived from a file. The research also seeks to prove that:

- Digital Storytelling, when combined with local history and archive material, can help the educational process.
- Digital Storytelling can be utilized in the context of the Flexible Zone lesson or other Primary Education lessons by teachers.
- Digital enriched teaching intervention has proven more effective for the educational process, in comparison to linear / classic teaching.
- Teachers can converse with a file and teach the lesson of History, which is related to society, economics, geography or even the environment of a place, through a cross-curricular guided project as part of the Flexible Zone lesson

Methodology
Course of Teaching/ Estimated Time
For the implementation of the educational scenario, 6 two-hour teaching interventions will be held. There will be two teaching sessions per week. (6 teaching interventions of 2 hours each (12 hours total) over 3 weeks.).

Pedagogical approach
The educational scenario will be an interdisciplinary and guided project. It is an open-ended pedagogical approach, also known as project-based learning, (integrating both experiential and empirical learning) and allows an organized, yet spontaneous, activity of a group of students, in order to fulfill a complex creative work have chosen to fulfill. Regarding the duration, it is a modest project, which seeks to explore a topic in depth and to approach thematically and multiperspectively. The active involvement of students and the development of both oral communication and written production are just some of the results sought-after.

The role of the teacher is that of the counselor and the coordinator. It is instructive and he intervenes when asked by the students. Undertaking the important role of the assistant in the research process, he tries to provide all the information that students need and at the same time, encourages a collaborative process. The center of gravity is shifted to students and the collective form of research and work.

Regarding the activities, it is suggested to be prefixed with an emphasis on searching and processing information in printed and electronic sources. Students are recommended to be involved in discussions on the subject, in the classroom, as well as in wider learning communities.

❖ Stage 1: Reflection
The initial stimulus that will generate the reflection and trigger the exploration and work, will emerge after watching a digital story about the salt and salt marshes of

Tourlida-Messolonghi and photographic material from the General State Archives of Aitoloakarnania. This digital story will provide a starting point for classroom discussion and searching for information on salt, salt marshes and Messolonghi.

❖ Stage 2: Subject Selection
Presentation of the subject
The teacher has already chosen the subject and is making sure that all students are aware. For the presentation, a salt-related reference text will be used along with the information one can obtain about it from the archives, which will constitute the basis for the educational intervention. The text will also be in the form of slides and will be displayed on the projector. In the meantime, photographic material related to salt might be presented, detected in archives of individuals or organizations, as well as photos or videos that can be found on web pages.
Title: "Salt production in Alykes of Messolonghi: The case of the Tourlida archives also known as 'Black Salt Marsh".
Title Description: The title of the topic is described and its terms analyzed, so that students have a clearer picture and view of the type and nature of the research they will be called upon to overtake.
Modules in relation to the archival material
a. Salt economics - What are the financial processes? What are the working relationships in a municipal salt enterprise?
   Archive material: use of period municipal enterprise contracts, as well as a budget and a premeditation study.
b. The environment of a lagoon as a salt production space - The lagoon of Messolonghi –Aitoliko as a salt production space and a natural reserve (RAMSAR Treaty, Natura network). Archive material: K.A. study Stasinopoulos.
c. How is salt produced in a salt factory? What cultivation processes take place?
   Archival material: The budget of a municipal salt enterprise (machinery and tools, rolling stock, repairs and maintenance operations, summer farming, cultivation and extraction materials, mining and salt collection).

❖ Stage 3: Planning teaching activities
The students will work in groups and each group will aim to collect information and images from documents and sources, from General State Archives of Messolonghi and the internet, regarding:
• salt: all aspects of production activity (nature, sustainability, economy, production, local product, cultivation and mining) during its production process,
• other issues that may be related to salt (proverbs, romances, fairy tales, traditions, doctrines, culinary art, nutrition, etc.),
• the salt marshes of Messolonghi,
• the environment of the Messolonghi lagoon,
• Messolonghi,

The ultimate aim is to reconstruct the history of an era and then, create a text based both on archival material and searches on the Internet.
Along with the activity distributed at each teaching intervention, the GSA of Messolonghi will also be distributed in hard copy to be used as students want.
At the end of the process, each group should present a text on each topic that they will choose to focus on and which will be related to the aforementioned. This final text, will be created collaboratively by all students, after the groups have first collected images from the internet, and have written accompanying text for each one. Thus, the final text will be a combination of all texts and images of all groups.
At a subsequent stage, these texts, both the accompanying texts and the final one, will be proven useful and will be deployed in order to compose the digital storytelling of a story, through images that the students themselves have collected and through their own produced texts, with the help of the teacher responsible and the teacher of I.C.T.

❖ Stage 4: Conduct of Teaching Activities
In order to gather information, it is first suggested to conduct research in the school library and conduct online searches with the supervision of the teacher to ensure the smooth and regular operation of the research process and safe internet browsing.
Students could also be asked to interview residents of the area on salt and salt marshes.

❖ Stage 5: Assessment
At the final stage, it is useful to collaboratively make a critical evaluation of the work carried out. All members of the team discuss the extent to which their original goals were achieved, and how the whole process unfolded. An evaluation will be made of the final results along with a reference to any possible problems encountered during the investigation, and how they were resolved.

Expected results of the survey
Digital Storytelling is an effective educational tool for re-narrating Public History and can be utilized in Local History lessons by teachers. Digital enriched teaching intervention has proven more effective for the educational process, in comparison to linear / classic teaching. Teachers can converse with a file and teach the lesson of History, which is related to society, economics, geography or even the environment of a place, through a cross-curricular guided project as part of the Local History course.

Research Evaluation / Connection to Research Questions
The following research questions were raised for the implementation of the research:
1. What are the attitudes and perceptions of teachers regarding Digital Storytelling? Is it an effective educational tool for re-narrating public history? Can teachers make use of it in the context of the Flexible Zone lesson?
2. Is digital enriched teaching more effective than linear / classic teaching?
3. Can teachers converse with a file and teach the lesson of History, which is related to society, economics, geography or even the environment of a place, through a cross-curricular guided project as part of the Local History course?

In relation to the first research question raised which was related to the attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards digital storytelling, it has been proven that Digital

Storytelling functions as an effective educational tool for teachers to re-narrate Public History. Moreover, it can be used not only in the context of Flexible Zone lessons, but also in other Primary Education courses. Based merely on this fact, is easy to conclude that Digital Storytelling can be a powerful educational tool for courses that are not necessarily related to historical or literary content.

In relation to the second research question raised which was related to the effectiveness of digital enriched teaching intervention in comparison to linear / classic teaching throughout the educational process, it emerged from the results, that teachers believe digital enriched teaching intervention is more effective.

In relation to the third research question raised which was related to the attitude of teachers towards the possibility to converse with a file and teach the lesson of History, which is related to society, economics, geography or even the environment of a place, through a cross-curricular guided project as part of the Flexible Zone course, it emerged that they believe that they can do it to a grate extend.

Conclusion

After examining teachers prevailing perceptions towards the use of Digital Storytelling in the educational process and investigating whether Digital Storytelling itself is an effective educational tool for re-narrating public history, it was subsequently examined whether Digital Storytelling can be used by teachers, and what perceptions they may have formed of a guided scenario whose material is derived from a file. Therefore, this has resulted in the findings of the research being fully in line with the aims of the research, set at the beginning of the research process.

Digital enriched teaching is moving away from the established classic/ linear teaching frameworks and allows both students' self-action and involvement, and facilitates the educational process itself, thereby making the storytelling more visual, direct and lively.

Digital storytelling, the ability to search online and edit information relevant to the topic under consideration, along with the ability to search digital archive material, useful for multi-faceted discussion of the subject, and of course, the creation of new self-existent stories that derive their themes from people's daily lives and habits, are only some of reasons that seem to make digital enriched teaching more effective in the eyes of teachers than the traditional and established way of teaching.

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies in the educational process is proving critical and necessary. It is no coincidence that digitally enriched teaching interventions have been deemed by teachers as more appropriate and effective than classic/ linear teaching. Utilizing modern technological means and tools, such as Digital Storytelling, Information and Communication Technologies can provide teachers with more opportunities to further develop the teaching process itself while at the same time facilitate the learning process and enrich their educational tools, while broadening and cohering the concept of learning.

The world of archives is a world that goes hand in hand with yesterday and today and human society, a world probably born out of that need of recording. Thus, conversing with a file is not an easy process, let alone creating an entire lesson based on this conversation and associate it with society, the economy, the geography or even the environment of a place.

Local History and the Flexible Zone as separate courses, as well as the instructional exploitation of Information and Communication Technologies, offer these opportunities to teachers, both on the issues they are dealing with and the tools and methods they use can take advantage of.

The conducted investigation confirmed the research hypothesis. Digital Storytelling is an effective educational tool for re-narrating public history and can be used in Local History lessons by teachers. Digital enriched teaching intervention is more effective for the educational process than linear / classic teaching. Finally, teachers can converse with a file and teach the lesson of History, which is related to society, economics, geography or even the environment of a place, through a cross-curricular guided project as part of the Flexible Zone lesson.

Thus, the use of Digital Storytelling in the educational process is suggested, as through the results of the present research, its usefulness and the important role it can play in education is proven. It is a useful and effective educational tool, which in general can facilitate the conduct of the educational processes and activities, facilitating the learning process itself.

The creation of digital history as well as the steps to be taken in order for students themselves to compose a Digital Storytelling, can be integrated – both theory and practice - as an independent module in the IT course or in the Flexible Zone. Consequently, Digital Storytelling and the way it is composed will become more accessible to children, who will learn to handle it better as a means of accessing and communicating knowledge, which is one of the main purposes of education.

Digital Storytelling is the modern way people tell their stories and it should not be ignored by education, teaching children ways and techniques of storytelling that are certainly coming from "other times and other places", if not 'outdated, and do not reflect the contemporary reality and the demands of the present times.

Education ought to renew its identity and keep up with the modern times, which require digital literacy.

Learning is not a process that requires desks and classes, meaning it can be done anywhere and in any way. Man, after all, tends to learn and perceive the world from his environment. After all, a digital environment with unlimited possibilities seems to be a much more convenient learning environment.

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