DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE OF LEARNING SUPPORT

L. Dreyer
Stellenbosch University (SOUTH AFRICA)

Abstract

The potential of digital technology in education has been well established. Digital technology is progressively altering the educational landscape, particularly in higher education. The literature shows that effective application of digital technology can encourage autonomous learning, deliberative enquiry and stimulate reflection. Digital storytelling has the potential to engage university students through active participation in the process of creating a digital story and stimulate reflective practice (Robin, 2008; Loughran, 2002). Simultaneously, digital storytelling can engage students in authentic learning, increase their understanding of curricular content and strengthen their critical thinking (Sadik, 2008).

This research was initiated as part of a Faculty of Education's endeavour to promote e-learning and teaching. Students in higher education are expected to develop an enquiring mind. One way to achieve this is to develop in students the ability to engage in reflective practice. With inclusive education, teachers are the first professionals who are expected to provide learning support in the mainstream classroom. It is therefore crucial for them to be reflective practitioners to ensure that learners have epistemological access (Morrow, 2007).

In this research the use of digital story telling was explored as a tool to develop and enhance reflective practice in students enrolled in the “Learning Support” module in the B.Ed (Hons.) Educational Support programme. They were introduced to the making of a digital story and required to reflect on the content and processes they applied in a practical assignment.

Data was collected through student generated artifacts (digital stories). This had to be uploaded on the Moodle platform of the university. Two other sets of data were collected through individual written reflections and a focus group reflection. During data analysis the digital stories were evaluated on the three instructions for the assignment, against the background of the seven elements of digital storytelling. Data from the written reflections and focus group were qualitatively analysed through coding and categorisation (Creswell, 2008).

The findings indicated that although there were some challenges, it is clear that digital storytelling can successfully be integrated in teacher training programmes to enhance reflective practice in the provision of learning support.

The impact of this research is to encourage and embrace digital technology in teacher professional development for the classroom of the future that is now.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Learning Support, Reflective Practice, Teacher professional development, Higher Education.