

PROCEEDINGS E REPORT



# Digital Storytelling for Employability

Edited by  
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## Project

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## PREFACE

This publication results from the research work undertaken by the partner institutions involved in the Lifelong Learning Transversal Programme, KA3-ICT Project *Learn about finding jobs from digital storytelling*<sup>1</sup>, with the main purpose of enhancing the employability possibilities of graduated students.

From the conception phase of the project it was very clear for all the participants that the use of digital storytelling would be an added value to education, since this resource could mean a contribution for the professional growth of graduated students by giving them the know how to use new educational resources, approaches and strategies in the difficult period of looking for a proper job.

On the other part, in the European documents related to employability, to transition from school to work or the ones related to the relevance of qualification on the labour market, with direct impact on redesigning the offers of higher education institutions within Bologna Process, the concern is to find solutions for facilitating the integration into the labour market of the young graduates.

Moreover, due to the global economic crisis, for the graduating students or students looking for a job it is perhaps more hard than ever to success on the job market. They must use every tool they know to express them and to reflect their knowledge, competences and skills.

As we are living in the 21st century, which is a technology and media-suffused environment, marked by various characteristics, including: access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and services, and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale, to be effective in the third millennium, citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills related to information, media and technology.

<sup>1</sup> This Project includes seven partner institutions from six European countries: Romania, Germany, France, Denmark, Italy and Spain.

The current generation of graduated students is part of so-called “net generation”, “millennials” or “digital natives”. Thus, they are very comfortable with the new collaborative and technological based learning environment. Moreover, through the digital storytelling (the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling) they will be able to combine narrative with digital content, including images, sound and video. Therefore, through digital storytelling, students begin to comprehend how all the elements of writing a narrative work together and how to manipulate them for the best effects in readers and viewers. Also, the sharing and evaluating of digital stories among peers is an excellent way to foster self-expression and tolerance, and to create an engaged community of learners.

Taking into account this aspects, in a collaborative and somehow new learning environment, students are actively engaged in the exchange of ideas, the asking and receiving for feedback, the learning in an informal and, concomitantly, in a familiar way about their topics of interest, from peers, (older) colleagues.

Therefore, as learning, innovation and creativity skills (part of adequate life and career skills) are being recognized as those that separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environments (for properly access the job market), and those who are not, through this material which is fundamentally intertwined with the L@JOST project, by learning from ex-students successful digital stories experiences and from employers’ perspective, students will have us the bigger story of our time about finding a job, in different domains and countries.

The publication results from the first and partially the second year research work undertaken by all the partners with the main objective of offering a possible solution for a stringent problem of employability in the current time for students going to graduate. Therefore, the publication aims to explain the main aspects of digital storytelling usage as a method for employability, career development, reflection, assessment, consultancy, presentation and communication.

Presented chapters could be useful for young graduated students, ex-graduated students who are looking for a(nother) job, pedagogic consultants, trainers in youth centers and organizations, all the workers providing some guidance to young people and also to employers and to people who are working in recruitment agencies. Although the manual is mainly for the students who are going to graduate, the above mentioned people could also easily read it because all the content is presented in a very pragmatic way.

The book is starting with some theoretical aspects of digital storytelling approaches, following by the description of the entire process of creating a digital story. The available tools for creating and manipulating digital stories are also presented. In the next chapters, it is described the digital storytelling as an innovative pedagogical approach for the 21st century, as well as how the digital storytelling could be used in the job searching process.

In order to document the current situation and the role played by the digital storytelling and ePortfolio in each partner's country, the national teams started the project by producing six National Reports and a Transnational Analysis of students' needs for job finding as well as employers' expectations where some of the essential questions were responded allowing the following work phase of building up a comparative synthesis of all the reports. Part of this comparative synthesis is included also in this publication.

At the end conclusions, glossary and resources help the readers to understand the whole landscape of the presented issues, some of the terms and in case of interest find additional information.

As Coordinator of the Project I would like to thank all the partners who have contributed for this publication devoting much of their time and effort to the quality of the present work.

To Radu Szekely, the Project External Evaluator, I also thank for all the support and advice throughout the second year of the Project.

Finally, on behalf of the project partnership, I would like to thank the European Commission for the opportunity given to put in practice the original idea firstly stated in the project proposal.

PhD. Laura Malita  
Project Coordinator

Three particularly new factors emerge from the research that resulted in the texts written for this volume. They concern three fundamental tasks for the future development of the societies wondering what tomorrow will bring for modern democracies. The first question which the book could be thought to respond to concerns the way the present-day subject becomes a citizen. The subject's distinctive story is important in attaching meaning to being and becoming a member who is aware of belonging to civil society.

The narrative that we use to communicate with the world, the stories of ourselves that we use to interpret our behaviour, the conversation interwoven with stories that we use to reflect and to mirror the other residing inside ourselves and other persons from ourselves are the method we can use to live and feel present in the world we find ourselves in. So it is right to assert the sense of stories and find the nexus between our stories and our future. So the students who become young workers, through the art of storytelling, can enter a new life context using a tool, a means, a method that they have always known. In our lives, we have all learnt to tell our stories; since we were at school we have learnt to recount our desires and our future expectations. Revolving around stories is the future of man, but also the future of the young adult and even the future

of the established professional figure. In different ways and at different times, everyone tells their story to introduce themselves to the other.

Since nowadays connection with the world takes place through computerised means, storytelling has become digital and our stories are what we 'post' on our blogs or Facebook or Twitter. Today, young adults 'tag' themselves to tell themselves that they are there, to believe they are there, to want to be there. So does the means change the message? With McLuhan, we can say yes, the means does change the message, but the message also adapts to the means. The story and the narrative are the same as when we tell our stories, but the way in which these stories, these narratives take place can tell of and grasp deeper and more intense human dimensions if the person on the other side really knows how to read into them. The means is powerful and it says *more* than it apparently claims. The essays making up the volume explore these aspects in detail and introduce the reader to the crucial link between digital storytelling to represent the self and the formation, learning and future of the narrator and their story.

A second key to reading the book is provided by the guidance and the guiding function that preparing a digital story or drafting an e-portfolio produces for the person doing it. Our vocational path starts during secondary school, even though it could be said that the roots go further back, to childhood. Careers guidance is the task of primary school teachers, secondary school teachers but also adults who work in corporate human resources. Careers guidance is a far-reaching and important issue in young people's lives since it should educate people to make choices, and, even before that, educate people to understand their inner needs and the motivations pushing them in a particular direction.

The communication and dialogue between the young people looking for work and the entrepreneurs and professionals who already work in the labour market is a very intense form of careers advice. At times generated in an informal manner, nevertheless the dialogue becomes a means for reflection and can lead to the creation of new interests or the discovery of unknown potentials. Much more information can be grasped from the professional figure's dialogue and listening than any corporate presentation on the Internet could ever get across. This is quite clear when video interviews are used to provide an introduction, like a form of narrated video CV, or when interviews are used to present the professional activity being proposed. While the former key to reading pivoted around the story of the person looking for work, the young person trying to enter the working world, the second revolves around communication, dialogue and listening which give a detailed picture of what the professional figures do in a clearer and more evident manner than many adverts pinned up on the virtual notice boards of the portals of regional and local institutions and universities.

Finally, the third point of observation for looking at the volume is the increasingly wide interest in alternative forms of job placement. The European project, called L@jost, which generated the research work went so far as to produce innovative materials and tools such as a site where supply and demand can meet, a standard form for constructing an e-portfolio and a guide to building stories to ‘pin up’ on the virtual job seeker notice boards, therefore building a new job placement model. At the centre of this model is the young person with their story and, on the other hand, the professional with theirs. These days, university has to be concerned not only with putting together pathways for vocational training, but also models for encountering the real world of work. Not only should the emphasis be placed on knowledge and competence, but we should also highlight, as Gardner would say, the acquisition of a capability, a new form of ethical and creative intelligence. Of course, what is needed to produce the shift to support young people at all levels of schooling is precisely for the educational institutions to be engaged in and concerned with building an ethics of competence. This ethics of competence is the capability to enter the labour market with awareness, sense of the other, motivation to continue learning, creative flexibility towards knowledge, trust and hope, that is, the ethical directions of living.

For the societies of the future, job placement is a bet, which still requires study. However, this bet has to be taken up for the construction of democracies today. Work embodies a challenge for the growth and improvement, not just the survival, of current civilisations.

PhD. Vanna Boffo  
Florence, 20 October 2010





## CHAPTER I DIGITAL STORYTELLING INTRODUCTION

*Laura Malita*

### *1. From Storytelling to digital storytelling/What is digital storytelling?*

Over the past decade, the rapid expansion of digital technologies, the development of the Internet, and the possibilities offered by Web.2.0 for social networking, content sharing, collaboration and building knowledge communities, has also expanded access to information to an unprecedented scale. The web has to a large degree become the most important medium for many of us in order to gain information about news, company facts, organizational goals, product costs etc. We also use the web to keep in touch and to find news as well as old friends or business partners.

Taking into consideration the major technological developments, we can assume that our lives has also changed, we have changed the way we communicate, learn, research, make individual contributions, collaborate or interact each other. In this technological and media suffused environment, something has remained unchanged: people love to communicate, to express themselves in a way or another, to tell stories about everything: what is important for them, a daily experience (what is important for them – a meaning to life), a story about an important event or experience, a story about expressing values, connecting elements in one's own self, connect one to one's (individual or group) past, cultures etc.

But what was changed in this 21st technological century is the way we do that. Telling a story (aka Storytelling) has been around for thousands of years as a means of exchanging information and generating understanding. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values.

As all of the relevant literature is emphasizing, human beings are communicative beings. Telling stories is an expression of our identity, our consciousness and our relationship with the environment. And not only individual is a communicative being, also the humankind as a whole can be seen as a communicative organism. 'By telling we are changing the multitude of perceptions, impressions, facts, phenomenon's, and data from being contradictory, inconsistent, accidental and arbitrary to being coherent and to make sense. People are able to tell stories about things

they would not be able to explain in an abstract way. Throughout history, humankind has communicated its cultural heritage by telling stories and singing songs and stories have taken many different forms. Moreover, stories have been adapted to each successive medium that has emerged<sup>1</sup>.

In our technology-rich society of the twenty-first century, a new mode of passing along stories has emerged. Digital Storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling, being also an emerging term. Thus, the term “digital storytelling” can be used very broadly, to encompass any use of digital media to tell a story. However, it is hard to find a definition of the term, accepted in all the scientific and academic research areas. Even if there are plenty of definitions, none of them is widely accepted. I particularly like the definition created by Educause Learning Initiative<sup>2</sup>, which is comprehensive: ‘digital storytelling is the practice of combining narrative with digital content, including images, sounds and video, to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional component. Sophisticated digital stories can be interactive movies that include highly produced audio and video effects, but a set of slides with corresponding narration or music constitutes a basic digital story’.

Thus, digital storytelling is the practice of combining narrative with digital content, including images, sounds and videos. The purpose of a digital story is the same purpose as the one of the traditional stories – to invoke an emotional effect and/or to communicate a message to its audience. Digital stories can range from the simple use of slides and pictures that correspond to a narrative to the complex use of advanced sound, visual, and transition effects.

But digital storytelling is more than just using technology. It is a medium of expression, communication, integration, and imagination. Thus, in the case of digital storytelling as well as in storytelling, the main goal is to tell an intriguing story that will captivate the audience.

Telling a story is a process which can take place with words and other multimedia components, with direct contact to other people or via media. In any case, human beings are necessary in order to render the story, technological systems are not able to relate, but just to transfer the information. Therefore, it is compulsory to remember that the main important thing is to always focus on the story, not on the technology because ‘story without digital works, but digital without story doesn’t’<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> From an unpublished L@jost workpackage report, developed by Simon Heid, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Educause Learning Initiative (ELI), *7 Things You Should Know About Digital Storytelling*, «EDUCAUSE Review», 2, 2009, in <http://connect.educause.edu/Library/ELI/7ThingsYouShouldKnowAbout/39398>, (09/10).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ohler J., *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom. New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning and Creativity*, Thousand Oaks Corwin Press, 2008.

## 2. *Why is digital storytelling important?*

No matter which is the topic of the story, people tell stories in order to transmit their beliefs and values to the others. Therefore, storytelling and digital storytelling are very familiar to everybody. Even from the early childhood, the people's lives are integrated into a network of stories.

Moreover, we must keep in mind that digital storytelling is not new; it is simply an adaptation of the traditional way of telling a story that has existed for more than 6.000 years; we can even have a historical perspective of the importance and utility of digital storytelling.

Storytelling and learning are inextricably linked because the process of composing a story is also a process of meaning-making and reflection. By developing a story, the author will develop and acquire a plethora of skills.

First of all, the digital storyteller must think and reflect in order to find a valuable story. In order to do that, every digital storyteller must *research* through a variety of places, from history or person's past to their imagination. The process of finding a digital story forces storytellers to choose a topic that can be appropriately conveyed to a particular audience or purpose. This dynamic creates an opportunity to *reflect* on life and find deep connections with either subject-matter.

After choosing a proper subject's story, the digital storytelling begins with writing. Based on the outcomes of their initial research and reflection, the digital storytellers begin to write and assemble the needed components of their story. The digital storyteller writes, rewrites and continues the writing process through multiple drafts. It is important to note that the most effective digital stories have their genesis in sound writing, so it is important to emphasize the value of multiple drafts. Within the writing, it is important to remember that the story has a central theme. The importance of this theme is for the viewer of the story, even if the story is about another person's experience, the viewer relates to the story because they have experienced similar types of events in their lives or because they are interested or captivated by the theme. Thus, during this process, the digital storytellers will develop communication skills, represented by writing. Through the writing, the digital storytellers can increase their retention and promote meaning as well as bring clarity and understanding to complex topics.

After the draft is completed and the process of collecting the different components is also finished, a transformation of the essential components of the digital story into a script would be necessary. At this stage, it is important to remember the final goal of processing the digital story: a digital story between 2-3 minutes in length, which is composed of about 20-25 images and has a narrative length of about three-four pages, double spaced. Thus, it is important to understand that the digital story must be

clear, precise, but concise, in order to assure that the message is correctly broadcasted and understood, in the given and proper time. Taking those into consideration, the digital storytellers will rewrite and rebuild the stories; assembling also the multimedia elements conveyed, in order to really contribute to the meaning of the story, rather than being included only to make the story more “interesting”. Thus, through digital storytelling, students begin to comprehend how all the elements of writing a narrative work together and how to manipulate them for the best effects in readers and viewers<sup>4</sup>, so they are developing and increasing the digital and technological skills, too. They will also learn to choose the most appropriate software for their purposes and how to use it in order to get the best solutions and effects so that they can captivate the audience. Moreover, through the assembling and reconstructing the stories, the digital storytellers could increase their reflective thinking skills, becoming more effective.

The sharing phase is another important step concerning the digital storytelling process. Every digital story must be shared. After the creation of the story, the storyteller is on the one hand proud to present his/her creation. For instance, if the digital stories are created by students, by sharing their creation to the groups as a whole for feedback, they will understand each other as human beings and they will also understand that the storyteller is not that different from them. Thus, by sharing the digital stories a feeling of belonging to a community of practice and of learning can be created. On the other hand, by sharing their creation, the digital storyteller could get formative feedbacks and suggestions from peers. The idea of sharing also includes the documentation of resources, and the inclusion of appropriate citation in their products. Thus, by sharing, the digital storytellers will be actively engaged in the exchange of ideas and expressing opinions, in the asking for and receiving feedback. Another important benefit of sharing the stories is that the digital storyteller is able to observe the story and is therefore detached from the presentation, as opposed to an oral presentation where the author is part of the process. This allows the digital storyteller to actively participate in the critique with their peers. Moreover, by sharing a story, it could be obtained a deeper insight into its meaning can be obtained. The sharing and evaluating of digital stories among peers is an excellent way to foster self-expression and tolerance. Moreover, in our technological based society, by sharing, the story becomes global and available to global audience, which could emerge into further thoughts and reflections.

The digital storytelling is also important because it could imply visual components. Thus, when a story is narrated, the digital storyteller tries

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jonassen D.H., Howland J., Marra R.M., Crismond D., *Meaningful Learning with Technology*, Upper Saddle River, NJ, Pearson, 2008.

to promote his/her idea or his/her point of view and every part of the story could service this point, even if it is difficult to exactly define it. By combining images and other multimedia elements through the process of presenting the story, the digital storyteller will try to use every available tool to express his/her point of view in order to increase the attention of the audience and to remember it in time. By introducing visual and multimedia elements into the presentation of the story, the audience will in time forget the subject of the story and details from it, but they will remember the representation of the point of view expressed, because the power of the images and of the other visual elements is well-known and recognized.

Thus, through digital storytelling students develop communication skills, learn how to ask questions, how to express opinions, construct narratives and write for an audience, also improving their language and computer skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia: text, images, audio, video and web publishing. Research tells us that the process of storytelling, based on reflection and communication of personal experience, can increase retention and promote meaning as well as bring clarity and understanding to complex topics. Also, when digital stories are created, students not only become more technologically literate, but they also become designers, listeners, interpreters, readers, writers, communicators, artists, and thinkers<sup>5</sup>.

Taking the above mentioned issues into consideration, through the entire digital storytelling process, the digital storyteller could develop and increase a sum of skills. Starting from choosing a story's topic, they must research, remember, think and rethink the whole subject, all those activities being part of so-called learning by doing and learning by discovering from different experiences.

The process of digital storytelling provides a high-quality learning experience because the learning experience honors the writing process first. Thus, by writing, the digital storytellers have the possibilities to express and enhance their creativity by developing exciting and interesting stories to capture and retain the audience's attention. Moreover, regarding the creativity, we can assume that digital storytelling enables authors to recapture creativity, develop it and intensify it, apply and re-apply it, extend and enhance it.

In addition, digital storytelling helps the authors to write more effectively by permitting the visualization of the writing, simultaneously, resulting in an additional level of perception that extends the writing process to a place seldom reached.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kajder S.B., *Enter Here: Personal Narrative and Digital Storytelling*, «English Journal», 93, 2004, pp. 64-68.

Moreover, by introducing the digital elements, the acquired skills are diversified. Thus, by using digital and multimedia objects as well as different software applications, the digital storytellers will develop or enhance multimedia and digital literacy. By including of the technology into the digital storytelling processing, the learning experiences are extended beyond that could be accomplished without technology.

In addition to this, digital storytelling develops visual and multimedia literacy in digital storytellers. Digital storytelling addresses the development of the interpretation of digital media and the application of that interpretation to a personal message or story.

Moreover, digital storytelling teaches elements of technology and information literacy—authors use different computer applications and must be conversant about managing and locating visuals and videos, as well as being able to do so in the context of copyright and fair use.

However, digital storytelling provides the authors with a competitive and compelling voice, by enlarging the boundaries of who digital storytellers can communicate with and by increasing the depth and power of that communication.

Therefore, digital storytelling provides an authentic personal learning experience – as such; the authors' involvement is greatly increased, resulting in greatly improved motivation and end product.

Digital storytelling uses multimodal literacy concepts in order to create knowledge and enhance learning. The process of writing a story, molding it to a specific audience, fitting it within technical and assigned constraints, researching and collecting supporting assets and crafting it all together requires considering the topic from different points of view and promotes a deeper understanding of it.

Thus, digital storytelling provides a truly engaging learning experience which blends writing, technology and emotion to create a compelling product of value. This process is one that digital storytellers can use throughout the entire lives to tell their stories. Therefore, the process of digital storytelling provides one of the best learning experiences available until now to the authors.

Digital storytelling is also important from a motivational point of view, as it is outlined in the following:

- A digital story is by nature short, precise and concise and also exciting. From the reader's perception, in a very short period of time, they can observe what it is described and considered important from the digital storytellers' point of view in order to present and captivate the audience with the respective story and subject.
- The process of creating a digital story forces storytellers to choose a topic that can be appropriately conveyed to a particular audience, with electronic elements, in the time available. This dynamic creates an

opportunity to reflect upon life or to research in order to find deep connections with either subject-matter.

- Moreover, by reflecting on the topic and by researching for establishing the subject of the story and associated resources necessary to develop the story, the storyteller will also facilitate the link with other previous learning processes and experiences that might contribute to the facilitating of the tasks.
- By introducing and associating digital object and multimedia effects to the written story only in order to sustain or to amplify the stories' impact and effects, the storyteller must be aware to fit the proper time period available for the story. By doing this, the digital storyteller will enhance or acquire digital skills and will also learn about different software available, how to combine them or which one to choose, what are the tips associated with the respective tools or applications, what is to be avoided etc. Thus, apart to learning from activities related to writing the story and apart from enhancing or acquiring digital skills, the digital storyteller will benefit more from the entire process: from the researching in order to select the proper tools or application who fit better his/her purposes regarding the story, from the self-confidence associated when the authors find and learn something new (so called learning by discovering and learning by doing), from the informal learning associated with different activities (online/digital behavior, how others understand and reflect his/her point of view, how they are engaging through the conversation, how to be aware of time scheduling and time productivity for an activity and for the entire product etc.), from the experience of other persons etc.
- Storytelling is an ancient means of communication used for transmitting the knowledge, values and beliefs, while digital storytelling is a new form of storytelling, is a concept and a term which has evolved from the traditional one and which tries to fit in our technological based society. Thus, the digital storytelling practice is considered an innovative approach. By practicing it and by trying to develop better stories, the esteem for the digital storyteller increases, because he/she is content of having the chance to try new things, which is part of self-satisfaction of trying to keep abreast of what's new in the field.
- The subject of the story and the entire storytelling process (how it is written, rewritten, combined with multimedia elements) is very important if the digital storyteller intends to connect and socialize with the audience. The audience will be captivated only by an interesting and exciting subject and thus, can be attracted in order to give feedbacks and to be included in a conversation which consists of exchanging ideas, sustaining them and motivating the personal point of view.
- Moreover, if the storyteller will intend to engage a real conversation around his/her story, it is very important to create a constructive flow of

conversation starting from the received feedbacks. Digital objects could be integrated even in the feedback area, not only to make the story more interesting, but to sustain and explain visually the respective point of view.

- All of the above presented aspects are important for the storyteller, even if he/she only wants to experiment and to express themselves without knowing exactly what the impact of the story will be. Even in this situation, by receiving some feedbacks from the audience, the storyteller must learn how to support and sustain the conversational flow around the subject. This is another learning experience which might lead to expression and exchanges of new, interesting and useful ideas.
- By sharing a digital story, the authors have the possibility to get a global audience. By doing so, the feedbacks received have a greater and broader importance by demographic and geographic perspective, as they reflect different opinions from different points of view and corners of the world. Thus, you never know from the beginning from whom and where you will receive a feedback, but there is always a possibility to learn new things.
- By using digital storytelling, the authors will have the possibility and also the facilities implied by associated tools and applications to express themselves not only with voice, but fostering a sense of individuality and of “owning” their creation. In the current technological based society where most of the users who are only reading (and hopefully, thinking upon) the digital content available, the digital storytellers have been entering the world of “prosumers” –term which designates an online user who also creates and generates digital content.
- Moreover, in the crowded digital world of prosumers, the digital storytellers will have the possibility to stand out depending on how he/she chooses the story’s subject, how he/she chooses to present the story (i.e.by adding digital and visual element and also emotional feelings to it). It also depends on the method through which he/she has decided to share the story and on the ability of motivating, engaging and maintaining the conversational flow.
- It is important to remember that even a small piece of information (like a story of about 2–3 minute of a show or of a video or 2–3 written pages) is part of the entire online identity and reputation of a person who has developed it and decided to share it in the online environment. This aspect is very important for all of us, even if we don’t realize the whole landscape, but much more important for teenagers and for people who are looking for a job, because it becomes compulsory<sup>6</sup> for employers and for the people engaged in recruitment agencies

<sup>6</sup> According to Carrier Builder Survey, in the US, 45% of employers use Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites to screen job candidates.



or institutions to online scan the respective person. Taking this into consideration, as well as the real reason of the digital storyteller who has decided to create a story, they will be more motivated to create valuable content, which will attract and captivate the audience.

- Besides the fact that the digital storytellers will enhance and acquire narrative and expression skills, they will also develop proficiency with multimedia applications. But the deeper impact comes from their critical thinking upon effective combinations among audio and visual elements. Each story challenges a student to select from personal collections or from other resources such as artifacts that meaningfully support the story and assemble them in a way to achieve the desired effect. In doing so, students develop a discerning eye for online resources, increasing their technology and media literacy.

Taking the above mentioned issues into consideration, we can now understand the whole complex landscape of the digital storytelling. On the one hand, the digital storyteller must reflect, choose and refine the subject of the story. On the other hand, the author must research into memory, past experiences or to scan additional sources in order to find the most suitable resources. After the revising of the “bibliography”, the digital storytelling will start to develop the digital story, by combining narrative elements with audio, video, multimedia and emotional elements which will add value to the story. Another important issue is related to the final product: the story must to be short, clear, precise and concise in order to transmit the expected message, to attract and captivate enough the audience in order to be motivated to participate to the conversational flow around the story’s subject. By doing this, through digital stoytelling the authors will develop or enhance a plethora of skills: narrating and writing for an audience, communicational skills (receiving and giving responses to the feedbacks, expressing opinions), reflecting & critical thinking, also improving their language and computer skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia: text, images, audio, video and web publishing. Also, when digital stories are created, students not only become more technologically literate, but they also become designers, listeners, interpreters, readers, writers, communicators, artists, and thinkers.

Therefore, the entire digital storytelling landscape is important and complex and in the following chapters, the above mentioned issues will be presented in more detail.

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## CHAPTER II HOW TO CREATE A DIGITAL STORY? THE DIGITAL STORY PROCESS

*Javier Farto López  
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### *1. Story shorts according to the message expected to appear*

In order to begin the storytelling process, a basic approach which provides sense to our story is required. Each story should be structured and should have a main goal. Asking ourselves several questions is necessary in order to achieve a clear one and to successfully develop the whole process.

#### *Who am I?*

Storytelling is based mainly upon direct personal communication between the storyteller and the audience. To ensure the successful development of this communication, the storyteller should assign him/herself a credible role in the story, related to the other components of the storytelling process: the atmosphere, the aims, the framework, the events or the happenings.

#### *Why am I here?*

Another noteworthy aspect is the desirability to establish a clear link between the person who tells a story and the purpose. The main goal of storytelling is to move, not just to communicate, but to communicate by transmitting something, up to the point of reaching move or move to a hearing so as to keep attention. Therefore, the storyteller has to convey something attractive enough to maintain the audience's interest.

#### *Visionary Story*

The choice of a theme which allows a certain route is highly recommended; the story starts with an initial situation and it continues with a series of positive and negative events; towards the end of the story, the negative events and problems are gradually solved and often a teaching or a moral is present in the conclusion.

#### *Working values*

One of the objectives that have to be present in the wording of the cartoon is intended to transfer a clear message to the audience, message accompanied by a set of values and principles which we are engaged to transmit.

## 2. Theme

In order to connect with the audience, it is essential to find a topic of general interest. The subject can be of interest for the audience depending on multiple factors such as the expression, the staging, coherence and cohesion of the message, and the type of theme. The choice of a subject is often conditioned by the type of receptor, being much more difficult to connect to a public heterogeneous in age, interests, economic status, and language than with a homogeneous one. That is the reason why finding the right theme can become a complicated undertaking, especially for those with less imagination.

For this type of people, Gilly Adams says that if you are stuck for a topic, think of something about which you feel passionate or focus on an event in your life which provoked a strong emotion – happiness, anger or sadness.

One of the characteristics of digital storytelling is its conciseness, so that a narrative pertaining to this type of stories with a length between 250 and 300 words is considered an ideal one. This aspect is important when choosing a theme - it has to be something important for you, as you feel involved to convey passion, but it is not necessary to choose a theme to “change the world,”; indeed it is better and more suitable to choose a simple topic, without too many complications.

There are a great variety of themes appropriated for storytelling:

- Events (adventure, risk, overcoming).
- Location stories.
- Sentimental story.
- Characters story.
- Discovery or knowledge story.
- Routine or process story.

Thus, the storyteller should pay attention and should avoid themes such as violence, terrorism, sexuality, health problems and disability, issues which affect the security and privacy matters of outsiders, especially when working with children or groups at risk of exclusion.

## 3. Aspects to consider before writing the composition

As important as the actual content of the story is the organization of all the aspects that revolve around it. For this reason, we propose the follow-up of a series of steps before moving on to write the story. Firstly, we should specify the general objectives of the story; secondly, the narrator’s point of view must be included; after this, questions are to be added in order to facilitate the success of the narrative; then, specifying the content as well as defining the style and rhythm is necessary (includ-

ing all sentences to be read). Finally, we have to select the digital input, audios and videos appropriate for the plot, images, multimedia presentations and other resources that may be of interest; last, but not least, the grammar and the spelling have to be reviewed in order to have a qualitative piece of writing. In order to convey a clear message, not one of the above mentioned steps should be skipped.

#### *Definition of the global aims of the story*

Before writing the narrative text, one must clearly have in mind the message that is to be transmitted and the purpose to be achieved. One of the characteristics of digital storytelling is simplicity, so that unnecessary details and complex descriptions should be avoided in order to maintain clear the idea to be transmitted. In case of a personal experience, it must be one year prior to evoke memory. Otherwise, we must conduct a research process, and later (in both cases), synthesize contents and leave well-defined the most relevant contents.

#### *Narrator's point of view incorporated*

This is a personal account, so the narrator has to endorse the story, saving profuse details and descriptions that can disperse the hearing. It is a question of telling a story, not of exposing a succession of events.

#### *Addition of one or more key questions*

In Storytelling, it is necessary to incorporate into the narrative process a number of techniques in order to introduce new elements in the plot. These elements, well used, can help overcome the possible loss of focus of the audience, taking a nap, or it can diminish or increase the dramatic tension, depending on the case. Such tools may be represented by rhetorical questions, puns or by urging the audience to contribute with reminiscent elements of story's beginning, playing with the space etc.

#### *Content's election*

Having defined the main objectives of the tale, it is necessary to define the contents. For this, it is necessary to develop a narrative of no more than 250-300 words; this can be done only after making a selection of the specific events we want to transmit and adapting them to the narrative structure of a tale, taking into account the digital elements. One must be selective and extremely attentive not to render unnecessary details; the resulting story must please its author, but most importantly, the audience has to be satisfied with it.

#### *Clarity in reading*

Clarity is an important aspect when reading a narrative development. To achieve the highest level of clarity, it is essential to respect the recommendations below:

1. Avoiding details, listings and detailed descriptions: the message must come out clearly.
2. Preparation of the text or reading.
3. Using fonts that are easy to read (Times New Roman Normal, Arial, etc.), in large size and with a clear structure and enough line spacing.
4. Using different styles or different font sizes, depending on the role of the text (a review, an annotation or a simple text which is meant to be read) etc. The convention is to use regular or italics letters for the character's action and capital letters for the rest.

### *Narrative rhythm*

The narrative rhythm is as important as the contents. Part of our success in communicating the message is based on telling the story in an appropriate manner. In order to do this, we should take into consideration a few tips such as: using your own voice when telling a story (not imitation), playing breaks, interacting with the public, avoid self-correcting yourself or elaborating on details or explanations, no unnecessary comments made and so on.

### *Choosing a suitable soundtrack*

The choice of sounds may seem something incidental, but it is a key factor so that the audience could identify the environment in which the action takes place, the feelings experienced by the characters, breaks in the story and so on. Sometimes it is useful to use tracks or movie soundtracks, TV / radio songs etc. easily identifiable for the audience; in this way the, songs may be associated with the respective stages and thus the audience can easily decode the message to be transmitted.

### *Image, video and other multimedia resources quality*

The multimedia content distinguishes Digital Storytelling from the traditional tales of "storytelling", which is focused on the expressive, narrative and/or dramatic merits of the storyteller, although it may be sometimes helped by other elements such as a framework or scenery preparation suitable for understanding the tale or the inclusion of objects which are linked to the plot in order to interact with the public.

The multimedia elements (sound, video, presentations, digital images, etc.) add an extra boost that remains throughout the whole presentation. The combination of these elements must be very well prepared in advance; in this way, the control of the storyteller remains exclusively on his own narrative exposure. Once one elects the specific multimedia elements, they should be distributed properly throughout the narrative time, establishing certain peak times that will increase audience interest. These peak moments may be accompanied by sounds, depending on the emotions that the storyteller wants to transmit.

For instance, we can incorporate videos, images, sounds at the beginning or at the end. These elements help in order to have a powerful beginning or ending, as well as clarifying the message..

#### *Language and grammar correction*

The adaptation of the plot according to the audience is essential. In order to understand the tale, it is necessary to maintain certain internal grammatical correctness and organization, but the most relevant are the script contents, what is counted and how is counted. Excessive stylistic and grammatical correctness can frequently destroy what at first was a good story. The language of the story has to be a simple one, on an informal tone, rendering the vocabulary of the daily life and of an oral speech; thus, the story seems natural and becomes more credible and the message reaches the audience with the effectiveness we seek.

#### *4. Guber test implementation*

Having developed the original idea and having completed the script, it is considered appropriate to carry out some assessment in order to verify that the account is properly structured. Specialized instances in storytelling recommend working with the test the U.S. producer Howard Peter Guber (Enemy at the Gates, Rain man) applies to each proposed screenplay he receives. It is obvious that every film produced in Hollywood implies multimillion-dollar investments and he must seriously evaluate the chances of succeeding of the respective film before investing in it.

The Guber test consists of the following five simple questions;

##### *Do we have an authentic story?*

It is very important that the script be based on an original story, worked, lived and internalized by the storyteller. Otherwise, the audience will see the existing disharmony and will not believe a thing out of the storyteller's speech. It is for this reason that it is advisable that the story is based on the direct experience of the speaker or of a (close or not) person who tries to transmit certain passion in order to persuade the audience.

##### *Does it engage their addressees?*

For the success of the story, it is essential that there is a connection between the storyteller and the audience. It is pointless that the topic would be exciting for the speaker, but would not coincide with the interests of the people who listen. This is why it is highly recommended to study the degree of homogeneity (age, hobbies, culture level, etc.) of the targeted audience, especially focusing with special emphasis on those points which can be the common ones, and thus avoiding situations or details that might cause conflict or could fall into the audience's indifference.

*Is it adapted to the situation?*

At the starting moment of the exposure, the circumstances of time, space or current news occurring around should make the storyteller think about them. For example, if the tale presents aviation as the author's favourite hobby and it has to be conveyed a few hours after a plane crash, then some changes should be made.

*Is it linked to a top idea?*

It is essential that the story, even if it has a playful nature or it is a comedy, is related to a successful experience, a goal, or a exemplary happening which is considered admirable and worthy by the audience or by the entire society. If we were to think, every great work of literature or Disney movie ends with a teaching or a moral.

*Is it adapted to the location?*

As we mentioned before about the idea that the same story will not be transferred in the same manner to different audiences, the same happens with the location.

The digital stories are known to be able to adapt to the frame, so that it would not be the same situation to train young people at a small workshop in a community centre or to a convention fire or training for unemployed women. In this regard, it is important to take care of every detail and adapt the language, length of speech or break times to each type of audience.

In conclusion, the test Guber applied to the story and to its characteristics (audience, time, location, etc), does not guarantee the success of the storytelling session, but it can be a certain support that gives the storyteller security and confidence to successfully deal with the crucial moment of exposure.

*5. Stages: addition of digital components to the story*

After the steps followed for making the draft of a conventional narrative composition, i.e., after setting some broad outlines and goals of storytelling and after writing the script, you should consider the inclusion of multimedia elements into the story, those that make the difference between a traditional story and a digital story.

The incorporation of digital elements also involves monitoring a series of steps. First, after the completion of the script, the storyboard (sequence) will be drawn with the main idea of what is intended to include in each scene or at any time. After reviewing that all the texts are drawn up according to each displayed media item (either an image, audio or video, etc.), several test readings will be carried out in order to check that the story and the multimedia elements are properly arranged and scheduled.



Subsequently, we must plan the appearance sequence of each media item using video editing software. Then proceed to record the voiceover in order to appear when it is scheduled, in conjunction with multimedia elements.

Finally, it would be recommendable to add different pieces of music, sounds, transitions and special effects that can stimulate and make the presentation more enjoyable.

The described steps appear detailed below:

*Write down the initial script, gathering main ideas*

Making the draft of an initial script that would include the main ideas is the first step. Each script should include four key points to be considered a dash of storytelling: the message, the conflict, the characters and the plot.

*The message* – there must be a central hub that links the entire script and helps the audience to understand and internalize the tale.

*The conflict* – It is recommended that there is certain dynamism with ups and downs, as the conflict and doubts are inherent to the human being. This also helps in the identification of the contents of the story and in maintaining the public's interest.

*The character or characters* – the roles of the character or the characters must be kept clear; a link between them and the speaker is also recommended in order to enhance the credibility and increase complicity with the audience. The existence of a hero/heroine in the story is common, but it is not essential; this type of character usually deals with problems and complex circumstances and ends up successfully overcoming them, triggering a sense of admiration and pride towards him/her from the public; the existence of such a character gives the audience the opportunity to identify and compare themselves with him/her.

*The plot* – the evolution of the narrative should show the usual progression of a story, beginning with an introduction that intends to determine the message, then continuing with the presentation of a problem or difficulty that would prevent success; this subsequently evolves to a climax after which several solutions are shown. One of the several solutions is chosen to solve the difficult situation in the story and quite often the ending also has a moral.

*Storyboard design*

The storyboard is a sequence of images, videos or content that accompanies the story and its purpose is to lead to a better understanding of the plot. In its development, available graphic material must be adapted to the actions of the characters or events that are happening, seeking some agreement or alignment with the sound files and stories, so that no failures would occur.

*Script checking and correction*

Other important step is to thoroughly check the outline. As it has been mentioned, a good digital story shouldn't include hyperbolic elements and unnecessary details. A thorough reading of the outline will allow us to distinguish which is fundamental from which is accessory, taking already into account the available digital/multimedia content that we have to add.

Another important step is the review of the script. As already mentioned, a good digital story should not include any hyperbolic and needless details. A careful reading of the script will allow us to figure out the fundamental elements and the secondary ones, already taking into consideration the digital/ multimedia content that we have available to add.

*The writing of the text based on the graphic script described on the 2nd point*

*Now, we should give a final form to the paragraphs that should be read according to the launch of pictures in the video clip*

Paragraphs should be completed on the basis of each image, video or multimedia item. This step is very important in order to keep the pace of the narrative and not to produce mismatches between the contents and the multimedia elements that appear.

*Proceed to read the script after the appearance of the pictures and distribute paragraphs and to each of the pictures*

In this section, we should not exclude the possibility of making modifications, both in the script and in the multimedia contents, in order to set correspondences properly and to reassure that the multimedia contents reflect the feelings or events described by the narrator.

*Develop the image sequence in the video editor (carry out a first edition based on the storyboard)*

The next step consists of making a multimedia-elements sequence in the Video Editor program, based on the provisions of the storyboard i.e. organizing the various slides, images and videos in relation to the contents of the script.

*Add the narrative track (previously recorded voiceover)*

After adapting the script to the storyboard, we proceed to printing a copy of it with a font type, font size and spacing which allows an easy and quick reading. In making the recording, we must pay attention both in the volume changes, as in the word variation or collation of treble and bass, the intelligent management of the silence periods (always in relation to the multimedia elements), all of these with the objective of getting our message transmitted without distortions.

*Consider special effects and transitions*

Once we have organized the sequence of multimedia items, the need to include additional “decorative” or accessory elements as special effects and transitions between slides or multimedia tools it should be appreciated. On the one hand, these elements have the advantage of providing a dynamic component, which helps to set the sequence stages, organize the plot, bring quality to the tale and get the audience focused, but on the other hand, the excessive use of these tools can be a factor which makes viewers tired and discouraged.

*Background music should be added to the clip*

Finally, we should add a series of musical pieces that are sufficiently representative to clearly identify the contents of the script. Coordination between clips of music, ambient sounds and voice-over is essential; for example, hearing the start-up sounds of a train when the narrator is recounting his arrival at the railway station and displays the image of a stationary train is not recommended at all. Errors like this one could be fatal, confusing the public and spoiling the story.

## 6. Narrative/Brief recommendations

In our daily lives, we spend much of our time interacting with other people, telling one other what has happened. To achieve the goal of transferring their message in order to suit the audience, we need to care for a number of issues; these issues are represented by assuming the status of the narrator, narrating with interest and enthusiasm, a glued-to-reality storytelling process, taking into account the type of audience and the context and checking the correctness of the narrative with the help of other people.

In the next pages, we will add some keys points that should help in order to obtain a successful narrative story:

*Assume that you are the story's narrator*

For the successful resolution of the story, the narrator should be aware of his own role. In this process, the narrator must try to be comfortable with his/her own voice, without falling into over-representation or imitation and he must try to be as natural as possible, using his own words and expressions. Of course this does not mean that the narrator should prepare the presentation beforehand; a well-structured speech and confidence is enough to keep the discourse attractive and to reduce the likelihood of errors.

*Enthusiasm*

When presenting a subject in front of an audience, the way in which the topic is presented is as important as the content itself. In order to ef-

fectively convey the message, it is important to talk sharply, (not quickly, continuously, without missing a beat) and to add a certain dose of passion to the speech so that the audience perceives the communicator's involvement; the involvement and enthusiasm shown in telling a story will generate a higher degree of confidence in many of the listeners and the feeling that they are being told something important. If this tone is maintained for the entire presentation, the interest and the fascination of the audience will be maintained.

### *Realism*

One aspect to be considered is the degree of realism of the story. The stories are representative of a certain person's life, thus they must bear a personal imprint and they must have a certain degree of realism and naturalness. The more realist the story will be, the greater the connection with the audience will be.

### *Audience suitability*

The same story can and should be told to different audiences using different methods. It is clear that one of the keys which help to achieve the success of the story is the degree of communication that is established with the public. In order to achieve this goal, it is important, as far as this is possible, to have prior knowledge and information about the group of people who will form the audience and who will listen to the story. It is obvious that an account of the development of a career will not be rendered in the same way to a teenage audience, which has barely begun its career or to an audience of elderly people, which has finished their career.

There are also other factors which can influence the storytelling process and which may be of a higher importance than age. The education/training level, the cultural heritage, the degree of secularism of the group, the geographical origin, language or other personal characteristics as disability or immigration are just some of those factors. Another important factor that has to be taken into consideration is the extent of their knowledge of your own person; based on this, the trust will increase or decrease, and it is not the same to perform in front of a group of friends or classmates or to present a story to a completely unknown audience.

Different audiences have their own different rhythms and personalities. Few things make a storyteller look more foolish than making a pause for laugh, gasp or sigh when being in front of a new audience just because these actions have taken place with the prior one; a solution to this would be the modification of the timing and of the method the narrator uses according to the type of audience.

Finally, it is necessary, though not all the speakers do it, to take into account the developments on the degree of interest of the audience as the exposure advances. It is difficult, but the audience's attention is variable

and in some cases, you have to make changes in the story (while considering the limitations posed by the existence of a presentation video clip, storyboard, preset) in order to regain the attention of the audience and complete the presentation successfully.

*Credibility should be provided to the story: describing emotions or feelings and using adjectives for details*

Credibility is one of the most important characteristics a storytelling should have. If we fail in the aim of being credible, we will generate disinterest and boredom to the audience. Thus, in order to be credible, a realistic and natural depiction is required, as well as the use of feelings and emotions, all of them topped with adjectives used in the process of describing. Even though adjectives are useful and helpful in a story, they should be combined and used in such a way that it is not excessive. Generalizations, clichés and artificial feelings, phrases like “he’s always there for me” are obsolete and should be avoided. The use of new descriptive, attractive and original expressions is highly recommended.

*Design the plot sketch*

Developing an outline to structure the story is very important for ensuring the success of a narrative. It is appropriate to present a problem or a challenge at the beginning of the narrative and then arranging it in order to have an “in crescendo” structure which will maintain the interest of the audience. To conclude in a satisfactory way, the end must have a clear connection with the initial approach.

*Rehearsing*

Having defined the plot sketch, you have to review, correct and complete it before recording the speech, because then it will be more difficult to introduce changes.

A recommended practice is recording your own voice reading the script in order to listen it later. In this way, you will make some necessary changes (delete repeated words or ideas, unnecessary details, the introduction of interjections or vocatives, etc.) to avoid a sharp script, as we speak and write differently. This procedure also allows the storyteller to be acquainted with his/her own voice which is perceived differently after being recorded.

*Telling to someone*

It is desirable, if time permits and once the changes which we have stated are introduced, to ask someone you trust (which has to be, if possible, some contact and/or a person who knows the composition or the record of the hearing) to read the story and could listen as we read the script. In this way, we will get a second opinion and make changes in

order to make our story more fluid, comprehensive and suitable to the characteristics of the audience.

#### *Observing the listener*

Another recommendation to consider is not lose sight of the reactions of the listeners during the narrative time. During the development of the story, any factor can lead to disinterest or mislead the public; this happening is absolutely normal, especially in a heterogeneous hearing. The grave thing is when the storyteller does not realize it; for this reason, the storyteller should get concentrated on the story, should be receptive and prompt at the same time, in order to, if necessary, correct the tale and/or adapt it.

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## CHAPTER III TOOLS FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING

*Catalin Martin*

### *1. Introduction*

Digital storytelling is a very complex and dynamic activity, in which the story teller tries to express his/her thoughts in a detailed and unique way. The subject and the way of rendering the story can vary from an author to another. In this respect, also different tools/instruments can be used as specific ways of telling a story. In this technology and information-based society, the role of social media in spreading the words or helping a person to express his/her self is very important. Few years ago, a person who would have had a blog would have been considered a nonconformist person, but maybe the reason behind it was that the Internet was not so WWW. Nowadays, if you are not present in the third largest (online) country in the world (i.e. Facebook), “you don’t exist”.

The permanent connection to the Internet offers us the opportunity to relate every moment what we are doing or what events were remarkable for us; now, the important role of education as a facilitator and mentor of what we are saying appears. It is not enough to say something, it’s important to know how to say it, in which manner, what kind of description you should use, which are the “hidden” rules in social media, in short, one should develop a special behavior for this.

In the next pages, we will try to present you a few tools which can be used for digital storytelling. We have grouped them into categories: audio & video, slideshow, photo, text, mix or mobile tools and each category contains minimum 3-4 examples. These tools can be used only online, with an Internet connection, (excepting Prezi and Picasa which are available in Desktop version, too), but one of them may be used in other languages too (German, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.), not only in English. The first example is presented in more detail and includes even the modality of registering, of creating an account and explicit steps in creating a digital story. The next tools are also as easy to use.

## 2. Audio and video tools

*Voice Thread* <http://voicethread.com/>

With VoiceThread, group conversations are collected and shared in one place from anywhere in the world; there is no need to install a software. A VoiceThread is a collaborative, multimedia slide show which holds images, documents, and videos and allows people to navigate on pages and leave comments in 5 ways - using voice (with a microphone or telephone), text, audio file, or video (via a webcam). Share a VoiceThread with friends, students, and colleagues in order for them to record comments too.



Users can doodle while commenting, use multiple identities, and pick which comments are shown through moderation. VoiceThreads can even be embedded to show and receive comments on other websites and exported to MP3 players or DVDs to play as archival movies.

After **you Sign up**, go to **Create** button



### Step 1



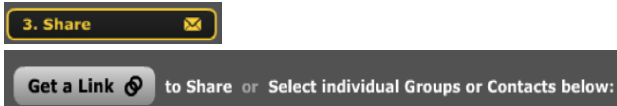
### Step 2



Insert your comments using your voice (record), your webcam or just type.



## Step 3



Also, on the bottom side you have some more options:



For example, below is a printscreen from a presentation uploaded on VoiceThread: <http://voicethread.com/share/844510/>



More pictures with fighters were uploaded. The author added a vocal description for each plane, and others could also insert comments in his/her presentation.

*One True Media* <http://www.onetruemedia.com/>

'One True Media' is a web-based platform which tends proficient solution for making the raw images presentable for sharing purposes. Because of their busy schedules and lack of technical skills, users often face difficulties in mixing and sharing their videos, and usually end up in stocking them. This online platform allows users to bring upon desired modifications in images and videos, so as to make it more eye-catching for online sharing. Equipped with several



advanced features, the website enables its users to transform their creations into fascinating video montages. The illustrative video presented on the homepage of the website, clearly talks about the purpose of the website, and its usability in present scenario, when people are thronging over web to share their touchy moments. With several testimonies from some of the key players in online social networking arena, the application is simply magnificent in its performance. It's a perfect blend of astonishing looks and useful features, which together help in imparting striking looks to the videos and images. One can add style, music, captions and other catchy stuff to their videos. In addition to editing their own media content, users can also enjoy watching videos and images of its other users. Users can also earn some money by joining its affiliate program. The application is compatible with almost all types of media formats and thus proves to be a competent application for the purpose of editing and sharing media files.

How it is working? Firstly, you upload your content (photos, video, music) into your One True Media account, or add from popular sites such as Facebook, Flickr or Photobucket. Secondly, use the content you just uploaded to create a video montage, decide upon the style, the effects, the captions and the music. Thirdly, share your creation with others online or with TiVo and/or buy a DVD copy of your Montage.

VUVOX <http://www.vuvox.com/>

VUVOX is an easy to use production and instant sharing service which allows you to mix, create and blend your personal media – video, photos and music into rich personal expressions. VUVOX reflects your life.



It gives you the ability to:

- Share your personal media with your network of friends.
- Personalize and customize your media to your heart's content.
- Locate and establish always-on feeds to your personal media.
- Take visual blogging and personal expression to the next level.

VUVOX gives you the power to create one of a kind stories in an instant. All you need to do is provide whatever cool content you have. Take pictures, video, audio and text. Mix it up. Choose backgrounds, colors, textures that create your vibe and then you are ready to share your piece with the world.

Yodio <http://www.yodio.com/>

Yodio is a very interesting application, specially designed for those who like to tell stories, for those who are interested in net-



working/social media. It offers an integrated, one-stop digital publishing service where anyone can go to self-record, produce, and share audio recordings (podcasts) and personal broadcasts (audio synchronized with digital photos).

Using Yodio, almost anyone can combine digital photos with their recorded audio in order to create rich media presentations, voice narrated power point presentations or photo albums. Now think of them being shared in a player similar to YouTube, so they can be streamed throughout the internet or the player can be embedded in other websites, blogs, etc.

With this application, you'll be able to upload your stories, and then add pictures to them. This will allow you to narrate the stories behind some of your favorite pictures. To record your stories, you have to register with the site and tell them your phone number. This will allow them to save your audio to your account, avoiding mix ups. After you are done telling a story, you'll be able to go online and start editing your tale by adding pictures to display with it. Once you are done crafting the perfect "yodio card", you can start sharing them with your friends and family, so they can know more about pictures you took.

*Animoto* <http://animoto.com/>

Animoto is a web application that automatically generates professionally produced videos using their own patent-pending Cinematic Artificial Intelligence technology and high-end motion design. Each video is a fully customized orchestration of user-selected images and music. Produced in widescreen format, Animoto videos have the visual energy of a music video and the emotional impact of a movie trailer.



Animoto allows teachers and students to create video presentations online with no additional software needed.

Firstly, upload photos or videos by using images of your own, Animoto's stock photos or import photos from Flickr, Picasa, Photobucket or Facebook, PowermediaPlus or Learn 360. You may add text, reorder items and spotlight images to make them more prominent in your presentation.

Secondly, Animoto has a huge collection of music for you to use. You may also upload music of your own.

Thirdly, let Animoto do the work for you. Give your video a title and decide the speed of your video. Then submit your video for processing, which can take several minutes. When your video is finished, you may go back and edit or remix it. You may also download, email and embed the final product on websites including social network sites like Facebook and MySpace.

*JayCut* <http://jaycut.com/>

JayCut is an online video editing service you can use for free and share with everyone. The service allows you to create movies, clips and slideshows or mixes. Once you have created your creative digital masterpiece, you can export the file from JayCut to YouTube your blog or your hard drive to save for later. View others' creations in their recently viewed and most popular mixers section on their homepage to get ideas for your next project.



*YouTube* [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

YouTube is the world's most popular online video community, allowing millions of people to discover, watch and share originally created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original-content creators and advertisers, large or small. YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos.



YT is the biggest database where stories can be uploaded. Also, videos about how to tell a story, or gestures in storytelling and public speaking can be found here. Click here for an interesting video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQzmtvdvhKQU>

You can upload videos on YT very easy. First, sign in (for this you can use your Google account), then upload them from your computer or your webcam.

For those with Android, BlackBerry, iPhone, Symbian or Windows, you can download YouTube app and upload videos directly from your mobile phone. If you don't have such a phone, you can send your video to a unique email address generated by YouTube for each user (example1234@m.youtube.com) and this will appear immediately on YouTube.

### 3. Slideshow tools

*Slideshare* <http://www.slideshare.net/>

SlideShare is a large community for sharing presentations.

SlideShare is a business media site for sharing presentations, documents, pdfs or to insert videos from YouTube. SlideShare features a vibrant professional community that regularly comments, favorites and downloads content. Content also spreads virally through blogs and social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and twitter. Individuals & organizations upload documents



to SlideShare to share ideas, connect with others, and generate leads for their businesses. Anyone can view presentations & documents on topics that are of interest for them.

SlideShare is the best way to get your slides out there on the web, so your ideas can be found and shared by a wide audience. Do you want to get the word out about your product or service? Do you want your slides to reach people who could not make it to your talk? Are you a teacher looking to share your lesson plans? It only takes a moment - start uploading now, and let your slides do the talking!

Some of the things you can do on SlideShare:

1. Embed slideshows into your own blog or website.
2. Share slideshows publicly or privately. There are several ways to share privately.
3. Synch audio to your slides.
4. Market your own event on slideshare.
5. Join groups to connect with SlideShare members who share your interests.
6. Download the original file, as PDF, documents or presentations.

*Google Presentation* <http://docs.google.com/>

Google Docs is a free, Web-based word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, form, and data storage service offered by Google. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users. Google Docs combines the features of Writely and Spreadsheets with a presentation program.



With Google presentations, you can easily create, share, and edit online presentations. Here are some things you can do with Google presentations:

Import presentations in .ppt and .pps file types and export your online ones.

Insert images and videos, and format your slides as you want.

Allow simultaneous real-time viewing of presentations, online, from remote locations.

Publish and embed your presentations in a website for the world to view.

*Zoho Show* <http://show.zoho.com/>

The Zoho Office Suite is a Web-based online office suite containing word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, databases, note-taking, wikis, CRM, project management, invoicing and other applications.



Zoho Show, part of Zoho Office, is an online tool for making pow-

erful presentations. It could be used by professionals, teachers, students, businessmen or anyone looking to put together a cool presentation. Zo-ho Show's pre-built themes, clipart and shapes coupled with features like drag-and-drop makes it an easy application to use.

#### Features

1. Access, import, edit and share presentations from anywhere and anytime.
2. Share your presentations with your friends/colleagues and the shared presentations can be viewed/edited with just a browser.
3. Maintain multiple versions of your presentations and track the changes.
4. Give a presentation to a client who is half a globe away. Do your demos while at your seat.
5. Make your presentations public. Embed them in your blog or website for easy viewing of your readers.
6. Draw diagrams using hundreds of symbols, flowcharts images stocked in our design gallery.
7. Apply some pre-built cool and elegant themes for your online presentations.
8. Images can be rotated/flipped and there are lots of bullet types to choose from.
9. Flip, Rotate and position your images as you wish in your presentations using Image Properties.
10. Jazz up your presentations with some nice ClipArt images spanning across various categories.
11. Chat with a participant as and when required during the course of presentation.
12. View your slides with three different slide views offered in Show 2.0.
13. Import your presentations with better quality and without formatting issues.
14. Export to html for off-line viewing.
15. Pull publicly shared images from your Flickr account into your presentation.
16. Organize, Share and Tag your online presentations.
17. Search a text on slide contents, titles, headers and footers.

*Prezi* <http://prezi.com/>

Prezi is a web-based tool that allows the user to create a single canvas of text, images, videos, etc. online. The presenter flies from location to location on the canvas, sometimes turning elements upside down, sometimes zooming in or out, to explore the relationship between ideas. Like a painter, the canvas draws the developer to choose visual imagery



to create the presentation, in contrast to the text-heavy, outline-based methodology of PowerPoint.

The theory behind Prezi is that our ideas are not linear, but rather bundles of interconnected concepts that are better captured as a whole with many parts. Prezi allows the user to illustrate the relationship of concepts to one another.

The true power of Prezi comes from painting a larger point composed of its constituent elements. For example, a Prezi on learning could start with the word “Learning” and then zoom in on each letter to find that it is composed of the elements that go into learning. The presenter zooms in and out during the presentation in order to illustrate the complex relationships that exist at different levels of the topic.

*DEMO* Go to Prezi, Sign in or Sign up, and start



Please note that for offline creation and presentations, you can use *Prezi desktop*

### 1. Double click anywhere to write

When you create a prezi, the canvas is your workspace. You can double-click anywhere on the canvas to add a text box to jot down your key ideas. As your ideas fill the canvas, you can drag it around to create more space.



### 2. Zoom in to develop your ideas

Once you have added your ideas to the canvas as text, you can zoom in to these ideas to develop them and add more text. You can use the zoom buttons on the right side of the screen or scroll your mouse wheel to zoom in and out.



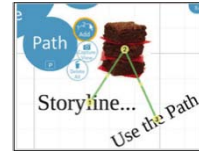
### 3. Use the zebra for structure and size

Now, you can arrange your ideas and create hierarchies. When you click on one of the text boxes, you'll see the striped transformation zebra, which lets you move (center of the zebra), size and scale (inner ring of the zebra), and rotate objects of any kind (outer ring of the zebra).



#### 4. Add images from the Insert menu

When you're ready to add images, you can simply click Insert on the menu in the upper left, and click on the image you want to use. Once the image appears on the canvas, you can click on the image and use the zebra to move, size, or rotate it.



#### 5. Create your storyline

After you've added and arranged your text and images, it's time to add the storyline or path. Use the zoom buttons or mouse wheel to zoom out, as seeing the "big picture" can help you determine the right path for the ideas in your prezi. Click on Path, and add your storyline by clicking on the parts in the order in which you want to show them.

#### 6. Click 'Show' to present!

To move into presentation mode, click on Show and step through your prezi with the arrow buttons or arrow keys. In **Show**, you can click to zoom in and out of your ideas at any point and press the arrows to get back to the path. Publish from Prezi.com with a click; after you present, you can publish your prezi by clicking on it from [prezi.com/my](http://prezi.com/my) and checking the box marked Publish. On the Share tab, you can invite others to view or edit your prezi, and obtain an embed code to easily add the prezi to your blog.



#### 4. Photo tools

Flickr <http://flickr.com/>

Flickr is a photo-sharing website where anyone can upload and tag photos, browse others' photos, and add comments and annotations. Users can create photo sets and collections to manage content and participate in topical groups to cultivate a sense of community. Although Flickr is ostensibly for photos, the site might more aptly be described as a venue for sharing experiences and building relationships. The site provides the tools, but the value derives from the contributions of the user community -- photos, comments, ratings, and organization -- and the connections that the site facilitates between individuals. In this way, Flickr embodies what has come to be known as Web 2.0 technology.



On Flickr you can:

- tell a story with your photos: insert comments, add notes, add people to your photos and add tags to categorize them;



- share your photos with family and friends;
- connect your Flickr account to Facebook, Twitter, Blogging and Yahoo!Updates;
- upload your photos from computer, browser, mobile, email, third party apps;
- organise and edit pictures.

*Picasa* <http://picasaweb.google.com/>

Picasa is an image organizer and image viewer for organizing and editing digital photos, plus an integrated photo-sharing website, owned by Google since 2004. “Picasa” is a blend of the name of Spanish painter Pablo Picasso, the phrase “mi casa” for “my house” and “pic” for pictures (personalized art).



Picasa is one of the many photo editing and organization services available for computer users. It is also (through Google Accounts) a service for sharing photos over the Internet. If you’re looking for a well-integrated program for tinkering with your photos and showing them to friends and family, Picasa is a useful application. However, if you’re looking for advanced features that come with “digital darkroom” software or a cheap place to share your huge photo collection, there are other choices.

Picasa contains several photo editing tools, such as cropping, color adjustment and highlighting. There are also effect filters like sepia-toned, soft-focus filters and portrait photos, red-eye correction and blemish removal. You can add captions directly to photos as well. You can also cut and rate digital videos using a basic video editing tool. A collage feature lets users combine music, photos, and video into one “movie.”

Picasa also allows you to upload pictures onto its website and create web albums for viewing; users can make their albums public or limit viewing. The Picasa service is now synchronized between users’ computers and their web albums, meaning that edits made to photos will automatically appear in web albums without the need to upload the photo again. Features like geo-tags and direct publishing to blogs are also available. Picasa users receive 1 GB of storage space when they sign up for the service; additional space is available for a yearly fee.

*PhotoPeach* <http://photopeach.com/>

With PhotoPeach you can create a rich slideshow in seconds to engage your friends or family. It also supports background music, captions, and comments so you can elaborate on your story further.



First choose where to upload the pictures from: your web album of Picasa, Facebook, or your own computer. If you choose to retrieve the

picture from Picasa or Facebook, you will be forwarded to the login page for the respective service, where you must confirm that PhotoPeach can access your photos for this purpose.

After this step, all the pictures are ready to be presented in the slideshow. You can change the order the photos should appear in by dragging and dropping, and when you are satisfied, click “Next”. Now, enter the title of the slideshow and add music. PhotoPeach allows you to directly search for the desirable track on Youtube without leaving the site.

Click “Finish” and your slideshow is ready. Now, add captions on the slideshow, and try embedding the slideshow into your blog, facebook, myspace, or posting to twitter with the buttons below.

*Facebook* [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Facebook is a social networking website launched in February 2004 with more than 500 million active users in July 2010, which is about one person for every fourteen in the world. Facebook allows individuals to create profiles that include personal interests, affiliations, pictures, and – with some limitations – virtually anything else a user wants to post. Information entered in a profile links that user to others who have posted similar information. For example, all users who list a particular band or movie as a favorite or who share the same hometown constitute a group. Additionally, users can join networks organized by workplace, school, or college.



First, Sign in or Sign Up on Facebook. After you edit your profile with information about you, start adding some photos: Profile->Photos->

Start uploading photos and add some description to each one. Set the privacy of your album (public, private, friends, friends of friends) are share your experiences/stories/thoughts.

Also, if you don't want to have problems regarding the copyright, you could use images from the following websites, which are absolutely free:

- Morgue file <http://www.morguefile.com/>
- iStockphoto <http://www.istockphoto.com/>
- Image after <http://www.imageafter.com/>
- everystockphoto <http://www.everystockphoto.com/>
- dreamstime <http://www.dreamstime.com/>
- creative commons <http://creativecommons.org/image/>
- bigfoot <http://www.bigfoto.com/>
- openphoto <http://openphoto.net/>
- pixel perfect digital <http://www.pixelperfectdigital.com/>
- stock.xchnng <http://www.sxc.hu/>

## 5. Text tools

*Storybird-Collaborative storytelling* <http://storybird.com/>

Storybirds are short, art-inspired stories that are curiously fun to make, share, and read.



This is a service that uses collaborative storytelling to connect kids and families. Two (or more) people create a Storybird in a round robin fashion by writing their own text and inserting pictures. They then have the option of sharing their Storybird privately or publicly on the network. The final product can be printed (soon), watched on screen, played with like a toy or shared through a worldwide library.

Storybird is also a simple publishing platform for writers and artists which allows them to experiment, publish their stories, and connect with their fans.

How does Storybird work? It's simple. Someone starts a Storybird by writing a few words or grabbing a few images. Then the other person takes a turn, adding more words and pictures. In as little as one or two turns they can finish and share a Storybird. It's that easy. And they can do it sitting side-by-side or across the country from each other.

Storybird promotes imagination, literacy, and self-confidence. Kids who play with words and pictures early in life tend to score higher in cognitive and aptitude tests later on. They read and draw more, and are more able to understand concepts and ideas. Plus, they become comfortable with the act of creation: turning nothing into something. In an idea-based society, that is a key advantage.

*Twitter* [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Twitter is an online application that is part blog, part social networking site, part cell phone/IM tool, designed to let users answer the question "What are you doing?" Users have 140 characters for each posting (or "tweet") to say whatever they care to say. Many tweets do answer the question of what the user is doing, but plenty of others are responses to other tweets, pointers to online resources that the user found interesting, musings, or questions.



Twitter keeps you informed with what matters most to you today and helps you discover what might matter to you most tomorrow. The timely bits of information that spread through Twitter can help you make better choices and decisions and, should you so desire, creates a platform for you to influence what's being talked about around the world. Twitter can give a voice to even the weakest signals because of its simplicity. Users can access Twitter on powerful broadband connections via a video game console or through faint connections in rural areas via SMS on a simple mobile phone.

## 6. Mixer tools

*Blogs* [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

Short for Web logs, blogs have revolutionized the way in which any individual can contribute their thoughts and ideas to the social fabric of the Web. It takes only few minutes to set up an account and a person who can type can publish on the Web in a matter of minutes. Every blog that's out there typically publishes an RSS feed, which you can collect in your aggregator. It's so easy, classes of 3rd graders routinely blog.



Blog is an online, chronological collection of personal commentary and links. Easy to create and use from anywhere with an Internet connection, blogs are a form of Internet publishing that has become an established communications tool. Blogging has evolved from its origins as a medium for the online publication of personal diaries to a respected vehicle for editorials on specific topics. In their latest incarnation, blogs represent an alternative to mainstream media publications. The personal perspectives presented on blogs often lead to discourse between bloggers and many blog circles generate a strong sense of community.

A blog is a personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world. Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules. In simple terms, a blog is a web site, where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. Or not.

*Wikis*<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wikispaces.com/>

A Wikis is a Web page that can be viewed and modified by anybody with a Web browser and access to the Internet. This means that any visitor to the wiki can change its content if they desire. While the potential for mischief exists, wikis can be surprisingly robust, open-ended, collaborative group sites. Wikis permit asynchronous communication and group collaboration across the Internet. Various described as a composition system, a discussion medium, a repository, a mail system, and a tool for collaboration, wikis provide users with both author and editor privileges; the overall organization of contributions can be edited as well as the content itself. Wikis are able to incorporate



<sup>1</sup> Cf. <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7004.pdf> (10/10)

sounds, movies, and pictures; they may prove to be a simple tool to create multimedia presentations and simple digital stories.

Wikis might be the easiest and most effective Web-based collaboration tool in any instructional portfolio. Collaboration using a wiki is not limited to students. Faculties can use wikis to collaborate on projects, whether editing a textbook, preparing a journal article, assembling a syllabus or reading list. Wikis might also prove to be an ideal vehicle for soliciting ongoing input for research or projects where community input can help inform and direct subsequent investigation.

### *Podcasting<sup>2</sup>*

A podcast is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication. The mode of delivery differentiates podcasting from other means of accessing media files over the Internet, such as direct download or streamed webcasting. A list of all the audio or video files currently associated with a given series is maintained centrally on the distributor's server as a web feed and the listener or viewer employs special client application software known as a podcatcher that can access this web feed, check it for updates, and download any new files in the series. This process can be automated so that new files are downloaded automatically. Files are stored locally on the user's computer or other device ready for offline use, giving simple and convenient access to episodic content. Commonly used audio file formats are Ogg Vorbis and MP3.



Academics at the Community, Journalism & Communication Research group at the University of Texas at Austin in the USA propose a four-part definition of a podcast: *A podcast is a digital audio or video file that is episodic; downloadable; programme-driven, mainly with a host and/or theme; and convenient, usually via an automated feed with computer software.*

A podcast can be a proper tool for digital storytelling; a person can share in this way his/her experiences, thoughts about one topic of interest on his/her blog or contributing in another online community sharing some ideas.

One useful tool for podcasting is Audacity <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. It is a free, easy-to-use and multilingual audio editor and recorder for Windows, Mac OS X, GNU/Linux and other operating systems. You can use Audacity to:

- Record live audio.
- Convert tapes and records into digital recordings or CDs.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7003.pdf> (10/10)

- Edit Ogg Vorbis, MP3, WAV or AIFF sound files.
- Cut, copy, splice or mix sounds together.
- Change the speed or pitch of a recording.

### 7. Cell phone tools

*TwitPic* <http://twitpic.com/>

TwitPic lets you share photos on Twitter in real-time. You can post photos to TwitPic from the site, through email, but especially from your phone.



First you have to create an account, more exactly to permit Twitpic to connect to your Twitter account. Then from your phone, you can upload pictures directly via email, sending them to an unique email address which is generated for each user.

*Qik* <http://qik.com/>

Qik is a mobile live streaming web application that allows users to stream live video from their cell phones to the internet on Ovi Share, Facebook, Twitter, LiveStream, 12seconds.tv, YouTube, Blogger, Seismic, Tumblr, and WordPress. It also enables users to share their videos manually to websites like Digg, StumbleUpon, Del.icio.us, MySpace, Technorati, Facebook, Ovi by Nokia and WordPress. Qik videos do have embedded links which allows users to embed Qik videos onto their personal website. Qik has a feature to embed the channel on a user's website so that the user will be streaming real time on his website as well. You also can chat with friends while they watch you stream live, or choose to share your whereabouts (or not).



*GeoGraffiti* <http://www.geograffiti.com/>

GeoGraffiti's mission is to organize the mobile phone community's "wisdom of crowds" intelligence, and to facilitate the exchange of that location-specific intelligence by providing a voice-driven platform that is accessible from any phone and any place. GeoGraffiti is used by individuals or businesses to record different information about specific location. It uses Google Maps



*Drop.io* <http://drop.io>

Drop.io is an easy to use, online collaboration and file sharing service that provides users with a simple, real time and private way to chat and share images, video, audio, documents and other digital content through unique, user-created and controlled sharing points called 'drops.



In just two clicks, users are able to seamlessly create personal sharing points, upload content via web, e-mail, MMS, Facebook, Firefox extension, phone and fax inputs and share it on-the-fly through drop.io's various outputs like web, e-mail, MMS, Twitter, iTunes, fax and more.

*iMovie* <http://www.apple.com/iphone/features/imovie.html>

With iMovie for iPhone you can edit 720p video on the go using themes, transitions, titles, and music, all directly on the device. You can do this very simple, using your fingers, using gestures like pinch to change the scale of the timeline. The software lets you export your work to 360p, 520p, and 720p, switch themes on the fly, add photos to your movies, and more. This application costs 5\$ and is available only for iPhone.



### *Other resources*

#### *ePortfolio*

The most comprehensive definition can be found on Wikipedia: ePortfolio is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. ePortfolio are both demonstrations of the user's abilities and platforms for self-expression, and, if they are online, they can be maintained dynamically over time. Some ePortfolio applications permit varying degrees of audience access, so the same portfolio might be used for multiple purposes.

An ePortfolio can be seen as a type of learning record that provides actual evidence of achievement. Learning records are closely related to the Learning Plan, an emerging tool that is being used to manage learning by individuals, teams, communities of interest, and organizations.

Below are presented three tools which you can use in order to create your own ePortfolio:

*Mahara* [www.mahara.iosf.org](http://www.mahara.iosf.org)

Mahara is an open source ePortfolio system with a flexible display framework. Mahara, meaning 'think' or 'thought' in *Te Reo Maori*, is user-centered environment with a permissions framework that enables different views of an e-portfolio to be easily managed. Mahara also features a weblog, resume builder and social networking system, connecting users and creating online learner communities. There are four easy steps in order to use Mahara: a) register: b) develop your portfolio: update your pro-



file, upload your files, create your resume and publish a blog: c) showcase your portfolio with views – insert videos, pictures, music: d) meet friends and join groups.

*Netvibes* <http://www.netvibes.com>

Netvibes is a personalized dashboard helping millions of people daily to monitor, personalize and publish all aspects of their daily digital lives. Netvibes features MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and chat widgets. Drag-and-follow Twitter widgets let marketers instantly track new topics by dragging conversations out to create new widgets to follow that trend. First, define a domain of interest and dashboard it. Find more content and RSS it on the dashboard. Then, add widgets, tabs, personalise the layout. For education, for example, you can find education news, videos and conversations.



*Google sites* <http://sites.google.com>

Google Sites is the easiest way to make information accessible to people. People can work on a site and attach file, information from other Google applications (like Google Docs, Google Calendar, YouTube and Picasa), and new free-form content. You can even publish Sites to the world. The Google Sites web application is accessible from any internet connected computer.



*Microsoft education* – tools for Digital Storytelling  
[http://www.microsoft.com/education/teachers/guides/digital\\_storytelling.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/education/teachers/guides/digital_storytelling.aspx)

|  | Microsoft Office PowerPoint   | Microsoft Photo Story   | Windows Live™ Movie Maker   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Type of Project                            | Create a PowerPoint presentation, with text, images, sound, and media clips, that students present to the class and post on a class web site or school portal.  | Create a photo story, an engaging presentation on a model of director Ken Burns's Civil War series, with text, still images, recorded narration, and music, that students present to the class and post on a class web site or school portal. | Create a full-blown movie, with narration, dialogue, still and moving images, and music, that they show to the class and post on a class web site or school portal.           |
| Media Techniques Available                 | Write script; add images collected from web sites or scanners; add audio; add video clips.  | Write script; take photos; add photos plus other images collected from web sites or scanners; add audio (music or voiceover narration); add video clips.  | Write script; mix still and video images; film scenes or images.  |
| Desired Outcomes                           | Build a focused, engaging slide presentation, and give a live presentation of their story to an audience.   | Construct a compelling photo story about a specific event, topic, theme, or question.   | Create a powerful film that teaches a specific topic or theme.  |
| Specific Skills Highlighted                | Researching; writing; sequencing; multichannel thinking (text, images, sound); revising/editing; public speaking.   | Interviewing; researching; writing; sequencing; multichannel thinking (text, images, sound); revising/editing; transitioning.   | Interviewing; researching; writing; sequencing; multichannel thinking (text, still and moving images, sound); revising/editing; transitioning; performing; acting; directing. |
| Real-World Connection Beyond the Classroom | Gives student practice in giving a museum docent talk or an historical or geographical tour, introducing a speaker, interviewing, taking oral histories, pitching information to a particular audience, and more. | Gives student practice in creating and understanding a journalist's photo essay, making a persuasive argument, interviewing, and more.  | Gives students practice in and an understanding of documentary films, scriptwriting, interviewing, and more.  |



## *Conclusions*

In accordance with L@jost objectives, the aim of using digital storytelling is to increase the employment opportunities for students and graduates who are looking for a job developing an online community and different products. For digital storytelling you should use online or offline applications which helps you express yourself. The tools presented and explained in this chapter are the most frequently used and the most interesting ones in social media, especially in storytelling.

Having in mind the fact that recruiters already use WWW for selecting and hiring employees, this is a great opportunity to present and prove your competencies, experiences and interest in a more concrete way, using photos, videos or audio registrations. During a job interview you have the opportunity to promote yourself, but if the recruiter visualised before your ePortfolio, where you presented, for example, your experience in the working field, then your chances to be hired are bigger. It is well known that more than 40% of the applications sent by Americans who are looking for a job are rejected because they have a bad online reputation. So, be careful – be active online, upload relevant content which can promote you and be friendly with the others.

## *Resources*

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- <http://cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/StoryTools>, (10/10).
- <http://couros.wikispaces.com/digitalstorytelling>, (10/10).
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- <http://www.educause.edu/eli>, (09/10).
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- <http://www.jakesonline.org/collaboration.htm>, (09/10).
- <http://www.jakesonline.org/dst2.html>, (09/10).
- <http://www.jakesonline.org/storytelling.htm>, (09/10).
- <http://www.killerstartups.com/Video-Music-Photo/yodio-com-add-audio-to-your-pictures>, (10/10).
- <http://www.mguhlin.org/2008/12/digital-storytelling-with-web-based.html>, (10/10).
- <http://www.slideshare.net/SherriLibrarian/animoto-for-education>, (09/10).
- <http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html>, (10/10).
- <http://www.techlearning.com/blogs/29246>, (10/10).

CHAPTER IV  
DIGITAL STORYTELLING  
AS AN INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
STUDENTS

*Laura Malita*

*1. Digital storytelling as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and multiple literacies development*

According to Kajder<sup>1</sup> when digital stories are created, the digital storytellers not only become more technologically literate, but they also become designers, listeners, interpreters, readers, writers, communicators, artists and thinkers. But what exactly does it mean to be technologically literate?

The concept of literacy can be interpreted in different ways<sup>2</sup> and the notion of literacy has changed in response to the rise in popularity of the digital media.

Literacy provision is increasingly important in education, within the context of the knowledge economy and of the technological based society. Therefore, most important organisms and institutions widely represented place literacy skills high on their agenda and between their strategies.

Thus, at a European level, the 8 key components included in The Lifelong Learning Strategy are well known. They are represented by: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; basic skills in mathematics, science and technology; *digital skills*, learning to learn; interpersonal, intercultural, civic or social skills; entrepreneurial skills and skills for cultural expression.

From the perspective of UNESCO, skills and competencies are gathered around the following components: learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together and learning to be.

From the point of view of UNICEF, skills and competencies are gathered around the following elements: interpersonal communication; decision making and critical thinking; self-organization and management.

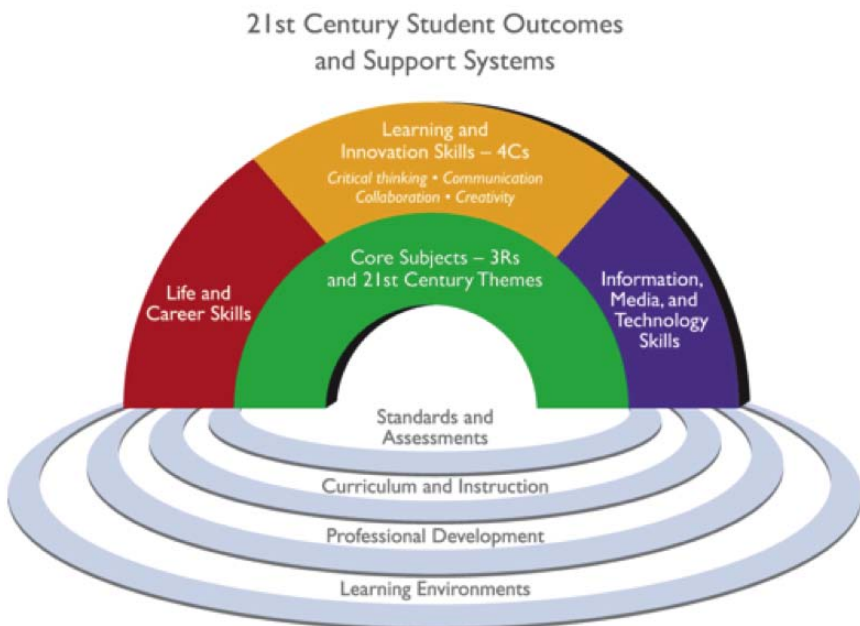
<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kajder S., *Enter here: Personal Narrative and Digital Storytelling*, «English Journal», 93, 2004, pp. 64-68.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Martin A., *Literacies for the Digital Age*, in Martin A., Madigan D. (eds.), *Digital Literacies for Learning*, London, Facet, 2006, pp. 3-25,

According to OECD, skills and key competencies are identified by: using various interactive tools (language, symbols, texts, knowledge, *information, technology*); interaction within heterogeneous groups; independent interaction; structuring life plans (projects, resources evaluation, setting priorities, monitoring the progress, etc.).

Perhaps the 21stCenturySkills project, undertaken in the U.S., manages to squeeze better the key competencies necessary for one person in order to be effective and competitive in this century; they are presented in the following figure:

Figure 4.1. The 21st century skills in view of the 21<sup>st</sup> CenturySkills project



Source: <http://www.p21.org><sup>3</sup>

Thus, the 21stCenturySkills project includes the following key competencies: skills for life and career; flexibility and adaptability; initiative and self-targeting; social and cross-cultural skills; productivity, coordination & project management and responsibility; skills for learning and innovation; creativity and innovation; critical thinking and problem solving; communication & collaboration; *digital skills* and *competences* and *media, ICT and computer skills*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. <http://www.p21.org> (09/10).

No matter to which of them one refers, it could be seen that in the above mentioned examples, skills and competencies are related in a certain way to technological literacy. In addition, there can also be observed other skills (which could as well have a related technological implication), as developing critical thinking, problem solving opportunity, innovation and creativity, flexibility and adaptability or productivity and entrepreneurship spirit.

However, Beetham<sup>4</sup> in their review of learning literacies for a digital age, contrast literacy with terms such as skill or competence, as mentioned in the following:

- I. A foundational knowledge or capability upon which other more specific skills depend, such as writing.
- II. A cultural entitlement, without which individuals could be argued to be impoverished in relation to cultural values.
- III. Communication, with the use of a variety of media for significant communications.
- IV. The need for practice, requiring development and refinement for different contexts.
- V. A socially and culturally situated practice, being context-dependent.
- VI. Self-transformation, with literacies having a life-wide impact.

Moreover, as it seems, the term literacy is now applied to many sets of abilities, increasingly so within the digital world. Therefore, Martin<sup>5</sup> identifies a range of digitally-related literacies:

- VII. *ICT literacy* – it has developed through three phases of understanding: mastery, application and reflective. The focus now on reflective is indicative of an understanding of how ICT can be used in learning.
- VIII. *Technological literacy* – it is a focus on being able to use, manage and understand technology. It is not unsurprisingly that this overlaps with ICT literacy and it often has a focus on computers.
- IX. *Information literacy* – it has gained urgency together with the development of the Internet, but it is not media-dependent.
- X. *Media literacy* – it overlaps with information literacy and it has developed from a critical evaluation of the mass media.
- XI. *Visual literacy* – it has developed out of art criticism and education.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Beetham H., McGill L., Littlejohn A., *Thriving in the 21st Century: Learning Literacies for a Digital Age (LLiDA) Project*, in <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/projects/llidaexecsumjune2009.pdf>, 2009 (09/10).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Martin A., op. cit.

- XII. *New and multiple literacies* – this recognizes the impact of the digital in shaping the context for understanding literacies which are continually changing and how there is a need for multiple overlapping literacies.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned issues from this chapter, it should be understood that digital literacy can therefore be identified as an overarching concept which focuses on the digital, but not exclusively on the computer.

When referring to digital storytelling in terms of digital literacy, digital storytelling has an amazing potential to be, amongst many other tools in helping students to develop literacies, a productive one, easy to use and easy to understand, affordable to many of them.

Robin (2008) sees the act of creating a digital story as drawing upon a range of literacies, such as:

- XIII. *Digital literacy*: the ability to communicate, discuss issues, gather information and be able to seek help in a digital world.
- XIV. *Global literacy*: having a global perspective in information gathering and interpretation.
- XV. *Technology literacy*: the ability to use technology effectively for learning and improving performance and productivity.
- XVI. *Visual literacy*: the ability to communicate, including the production of visual images.
- XVII. *Information literacy*: the ability to locate, evaluate and synthesize information.

Nevertheless, Ohler<sup>6</sup> discusses the multiple literacies associated with digital storytelling: digital, art (visual), oral and written. Processes such as evaluating, selecting, rejecting, structuring, ordering, presenting, synthesizing, assessing the message to be conveyed, and appreciation of the audience, apply not only to the story narrative itself, but also to the other aspects of the production, such as the images and sound. It is true that many of these processes are involved in the development of other teaching, learning and assessment strategies, such as the development of poster or oral presentations, but digital storytelling has yet to be considered by many as one of the tools that can be used to support students to develop these skills.

Moreover, according to Malita and Martin<sup>7</sup>, engagement with a wide range of media is now a norm rather than the realm of educational areas.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ohler J., *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom. New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning, and Creativity*, Thousand Oaks, Corwin Press, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., Malita L., Martin C., *Approaching the Labour Market in the European Educational Environment. Recommendations, Trends and Comparative Examples Identified in L@jost Research Project*, in <http://iec.psih.uaic.ro/ciea/file/2%20Malita.pdf>, 2010, (09/10).

Current generations of students (which have been assigned distinct labels: millennial, digital natives, or Generation Y) are those who know about the existence of Google ever since they entered the school. For them, Google is omnipresent, being a kind of second nature for all people who want to search or to get informed about something related to their daily current activities. In order to better connect with those students, highly digital skills literate, but even with their educational needs & expectations, educators should integrate the new technologies in everyday-educational activities, both for teaching and learning.

Taking into consideration the above presented issues related the multiple literacies associated with digital storytelling, a short conclusion is obvious by now: digital storytelling has the potential to be a productive tool, amongst many others, in helping students to develop literacies.

## *2. Digital storytelling as a deep learning tool*

Digital storytelling was introduced as a technique to encourage and embed student reflection on the activities in which they were engaged, recognising that reflection can be enhanced as a collaborative process<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, by using digital stories, students have the possibility to express themselves in their own way, as well as having the sense of ownership of their digital content creation. Creating digital stories enables the students to use their own voice and the potential for wide representation of their ideas. Likewise, through their stories, the students will have the possibility to stand out, and thus they will be more engaged and motivated regarding the self representation associated with their stories, highlighting specific characteristics or events which are part of establishing their personal identity.

Therefore, they will be more careful and will reflect in more depth to the entire digital storytelling process, which could be assimilated with a learning process. By searching and finding the subject of the story as well as associated resources, they will acquire information and digital literacy or will enhance their digital and information skills.

By combining different digital elements as text, video and audio into their story, they will acquire technology and visual literacy or will enhance their technology and visual skills.

By reflecting and refining the story in order to be short, clear and concise, but still to correctly transmit the message of the story to the expected audience, to captivate and to motivate, to actively take part in

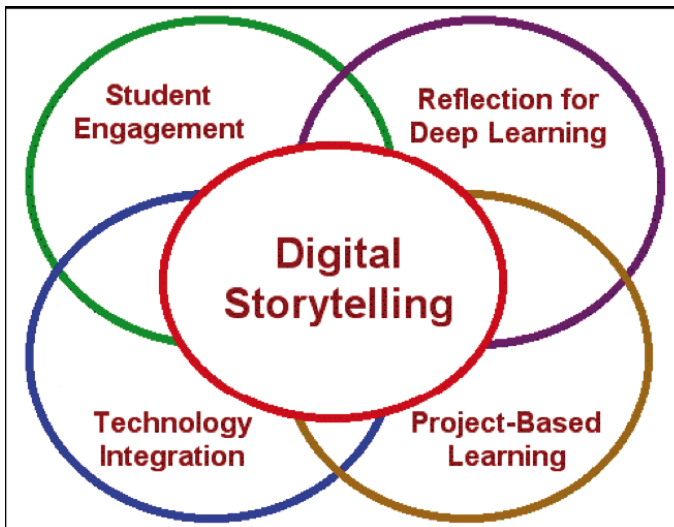
<sup>8</sup> Cf. McDrury J, Alterio M.G., *Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning*, London, Kogan Page, 2003.

the conversation flow, the digital storyteller will acquire technology literacy or will enhance his/her technology skills.

By sharing the digital story to the expected audience, which often is a global one, the digital storyteller will acquire global literacy or will enhance his/her global skills.

All the above presented issues are somehow in convergence and Barrett<sup>9</sup> visualizes their relationship in the following picture:

Figure 4.2. Convergence of Student-Centered Learning Strategies



Source: Barrett H.C.<sup>10</sup>

When a story is used to inform about something which is not already known or understood by the listener, then it becomes a way of demonstrating what has been learned by the storyteller. Moreover, as students will develop part their own digital identity, the storytelling becomes both a social and a learning process. Thus, digital storytelling can be a medium by learning and by teaching in a social context.

This directly connects with the pedagogy of learner-created knowledge, or pedagogy of learning through stories. Moreover, digital storytelling provides avenues for experiential learning, reflective practice, effective communication and building community in the classroom and beyond.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Barrett H.C., *Researching and Evaluating Digital Storytelling as a Deep Learning Tool*, in <http://electronicportfolios.org/portfolios/SITESTorytelling2006.pdf>, 2006, (09/10).

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.



### 3. *Digital storyteller as producer and prosumer in (in) formal learning process*

Digital storytelling as a teaching method has been widely used in various disciplines. Because of its own characteristics, it has distinct advantages in teaching and learning compared to the traditional methods.

Thus, through digital storytelling, the authors will learn to tell stories, and in doing so, they would become more effective actors in collaborative work environments. The particular form of digital storytelling encourages participants to communicate meaning on multiple levels (voice, point, emotional content, tension, and story) and it allows storytellers to take immediately perspectives and suggestions on their work, due to the sharing facilities. Therefore, one of the benefits of this approach is the way of consolidating ties among participants in the creative and social outreach process in which they engage. On the other part, creation and collaboration are considered an important part of the 21st century skills.

A key issue for the digital storytellers (from the educational area, like students) as producers is that social learning is more than individual learning in a social context, and it includes the way in which the social context itself is transformed through progressive pedagogic practice. Thus, students as producers is a critical response to attempts by recent technological developments, especially the ones which emerged through the use of Web 2.0 tools and applications.

An important characteristic of the progressive pedagogic practice is the fact that students are subjects of both the intellectual processes of teaching and learning. Therefore, the shifting will be between students who are educated and the students which educated themselves. Thus, learning does not mean anymore learning in order to learn, but learning so that the students may develop intellectually and emotionally and become more socially aware. In order to realize that, the educators should arrange the social context of learning as its own process of production, and this is feasible through the digital storytelling. By doing so, the students will not be only be just a consumer of the final product of someone else's labor, but they will be involved through the entire process of creation and producing of knowing. By situating themselves within a pedagogical process, whose meaning and purpose they understand, the production of knowledge is done by students, who felt they were capable of achievement because 'the education is not about the adaption to an already existing environment, but the creation of an adult who will look beyond his own environment'<sup>11</sup>.

Therefore, the student will be considered an investigator, at the centre of their own learning and development.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Vygotsky, L., *Educational Psychology*, Boca Raton Florida, St Lucie Press, 1997.

All of the above mentioned aspects in this section are possible and accomplishable, through the digital storytelling. The student's investigator role starts from the beginning of the digital storytelling process: the student must (re)search to find the appropriate story's subject. Then, the student must research into the memory, past experiences or to scan additional sources in order to find the most suitable resources. At this stage, by collecting and categorizing the necessary resources and creating in the digital environment a repository for them, the students start already to be producer.

Next, the digital storytelling will start to develop the digital story, by combining narrative elements with audio, video, multimedia and emotional elements which will add value to the story. During this creation process, the digital storytellers must take into consideration that the final product must to be short, clear, precise and concise in order to transmit the expected message, to attract and captivate enough the audience and to motivate it to participate to the conversational flow around the story's subject. Thus, the students must reflect to the story as a whole and refine the multimedia's elements (text, videos, images, graphics, and sound elements) associated to the story. The students as producer are reflected at this stage by the final product.

In the next stage, the story will be shared in order to transmit to the audience the final product. By sharing, the storyteller is proud to present his/her creation and is ready to observe the impact of his/her product to the audience. On the other part, by sharing, the digital storytellers is willing to be actively engaged in the exchange of ideas and expressing opinions, in the asking and receiving for feedbacks. These conversational flows around the shared story represent the final stage of the students as producer associated with the story. Moreover, at this stage, the students who aren't the author of the story are prosumers, by being on the one hand the consumer of the story and on the other hand, producer of the digital content associated with their actively engaging activities related to the exchanges of ideas and opinions.

Thus, taking into consideration the above presented aspect, the social context of informal learning is obviously represented by students which educated themselves. By doing so, the students will informally learn how to become more socially aware, more confident about their social, intellectual and communicational capabilities and more willing to participate in other similar activities.

#### *4. Digital storytelling for distance, online or blended education*

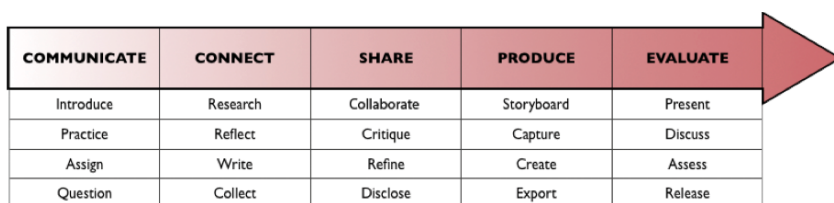
Online, distance education and blended education are an important element of the ecosystem of education. As they are preferred by a vast community of learners for obvious and well-known reasons, the importance of digital storytelling for such an education system must be underlined;

even the above presented issues for the general educational area fit with the online, distance or blended education, too. Thus, in addition to the above presented advantages of using digital storytelling in the educational area, another important positive aspect is related to assessment. Through different types of digital storytelling tools, the online, distance and blended education students could be involved in different educational activities.

Thus, the online, distance and blended education students could learn from the tutors' materials and also from the peers' pieces of work which are circulated among their community of learning and practicing. It is regular to learn from the provided materials which are distributed by teachers, but through the digital storytelling, the student could be an active part of this formal and informal learning process. In their community of learning and practicing, they could ask specific questions: what they don't understand, what they are not sure to understand, what the connections with other resources/experiences are. Thus, the process of learning also becomes collaborative and perhaps and it will blur even some psychological barriers. For instance, if a student who is shy or introvert will see that other peers ask and receive feedback in a familiar way, he/she will be more confident to engage their own flow of conversation or to participate in other discussions. Moreover, through the digital storytelling, they will be able to create their own content, which would be the reflection of a range of skills and competencies, detailed above. Thus, as collaboration and creating a digital content represent a major part of the 21st century skills, they will enhance or develop them.

On the one hand, the whole process of using digital storytelling in online, distance or blended education (but also in formal education) can be visualized through the following picture:

Figure 4.3 The cyclical process of digital storytelling



Source: <https://academictech.doit.wisc.edu/ideas/digitalstorytelling/process<sup>12</sup>>

On the other hand, from the above picture we can see even the fact that educators in the early twenty-first century face formidable challenges,

<sup>12</sup> Cf. [https://academictech.doit.wisc.edu/ideas/digitalstorytelling/process\\_\(10/10\)](https://academictech.doit.wisc.edu/ideas/digitalstorytelling/process_(10/10)).

but are blessed with access to unprecedented tools and opportunities for sharing professional learning, for creating community of collaboration, for learning and practicing and for assessing the students. Thus, as we can see in the above picture, through storytelling, the educators can assess the student's work (i.e. a project-based learning) or even the student's digital story.

### 5. *Assessment of digital storytelling as a learning process*

As we already could see in the above section and also in the previous chapters of the book, the whole landscape of the digital storytelling is quite laborious. Thus, according to one of the most representative expert on digital storytelling, Jason Ohler, quote 'The final story is the tip of the iceberg. Preparing a digital story involves writing, creating artwork, preparing planning documents, and a number of other activities that produce tangible, assessable artifacts that address a number of intelligences, literacies and skill areas'<sup>13</sup>.

Consequently, not surprisingly, the assessment process of digital storytelling is also complex.

Thus, according to Sanders<sup>14</sup>, for the assesment of the digital stories we must take into consideration the following issues:

1. The storytelling approach: which is related to:
  - a. the finding of the subject/story,
  - b. telling the story,
  - c. expanding the story,
  - d. processing the story and
  - e. story reconstructing;
2. The level of reflection, which means:
  - a. the level of noticing,
  - b. the level of making sense,
  - c. the making of a meaning,
  - d. the working with the respective meaning and
  - e. transformative learning and
3. The use of multimedia in reflective learning.

According to Ohler<sup>15</sup>, the assessment of the digital storytelling as a learning process must be taken into consideration in more detail and in more depth, covering the following traits:

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ohler J., op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Sanders J., *Reflect 2.0: Using Digital Storytelling to Develop Reflective Learning by the Use of the Next Generation Technologies and Practices*, JISC, in <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/documents/reflectfinalreport.aspx>, 2009, (10/10).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ohler J., op. cit.

Table 4.1. The assessments traits

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Story                          | How well did the story work? This trait can address structure, engagement, character transformation or any of the other qualities of story discussed in Part II. In fact, an entire rubric can be devoted to evaluating the quality |
| Project planning               | Is there evidence of solid planning, in the form of story maps, scripts, storyboards, etc.?   |
| Media Development Process      | How well did the student follow the media development process?  |
| Research                       | Was the student's project well researched and documented?   |
| Content understanding          | How effective did the student meet the academic goals of the assignment and convey an understanding of the material addressed?  |
| Assignment criteria            | Did you require stories to be under two minutes, use no more than 10 images and 30 seconds of music and provide citations in MLA format? Whatever are your criteria, be clear and stick to them.                                    |
| Writing                        | What was the quality of the student's written work exhibited in the planning documents, research, etc.?   |
| Originality, voice, creativity | How creative was the production? Did the student exhibit an original sense of voice and a fresh perspective?  |
| Economy                        | Was the information presented through the story sifted, prioritized and told without bird walking or detours?   |
| Flow, organization and pacing  | Was the story well organized? Did it flow well, moving from part to part without bumps or disorientation?   |
| Presentation and performance   | How effective was the student's actual presentation or performance? This includes burning a DVD, posting the story on the Web site effectively, performing it before an audience, or whatever the assignment required.              |
| Sense of audience              | How well did the story respect the needs of the audience?   |
| Media application              | Was the use of media appropriate, supportive of the story, balanced and well considered?  |
| Media grammar <sup>16</sup>    | How "bumpy" was the story?  |
| Citations, permission          | Has everything that is not original been credited? Have permissions been obtained where necessary? Do citations appear in the format required by the project?   |

Source: <http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/assessment.cfm><sup>17</sup>

Even Ohler considers this list much too comprehensive than it would

<sup>16</sup> According to Ohler: 'It's the term I use to describe the run-ons, fragments and other "grammatical infractions" that impede clear communication in a digital story'. (Ohler J., op. cit.).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. <http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/assessment.cfm> (10/10).

be necessary and that it contains traits which are not appropriate in all situations. He suggests focusing on a few, typically three to six traits. Moreover, he offers even a short version of the above traits, as follows:

Table 4.2. Short list of basic assessment traits

---

|  |
|--|
| Writing                                |
| Story                                  |
| Research                               |
| Digital craftsmanship                  |
| Media grammar                          |
| Met assignment criteria?               |
| <u>Voice, creativity, originality?</u> |

Source: <http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/assessment.cfm><sup>18</sup>

There is a great deal of material emerging on the topic of assessing of the digital storytelling as a learning process. But what is important to remember is that in the assessment of the digital storytelling as a learning process, the most important aspect of a rubric is the ability of the author to explain (why he/she used the pictures he/she has chosen; why he/she put them into that sequence; why he/she used the words he/she has used, especially any “key” words that carry emotion; why he/she used the tone of voice he/she has used for the recording; why he/she used the camera movements, and pace, they selected; why he/she selected the music track they have chosen, & why he/she used that volume level etc.), but more important to captivate and engage the target audience. Moreover, if it is possible and suitable for the assessment of the digital storytelling as a learning process, the author could also include his/her self-reflection.

Taking the above mentioned aspects into consideration, in the following pictures, there are presented two models of assignments of the digital storytelling as a learning process, as they are used by two evaluators in order to give the grade “A”:

Thus, from the above presented aspects regarding the assessments of the digital storytelling as a learning process, it could be observed that the most important factors are represented by the subject of the story (if it is clear presented, precise and concise), by the combination between the narrative text and multimedia elements (if they are chosen according to the subject, but to confer a plus of understanding), by emotional effect associated with the story and by the reflective process in communities of learners related to the digital story.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. <http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/assessment.cfm> (10/10).

Figure 4.4 Two examples of using digital storytelling as learning process assignment

- A
- Uses Photo Story 3 or similar to tell a narrative or produce a persuasive text with strong emotive impact.
  - Demonstrates highly effective selection and manipulation of visual images and transition tools to support the theme of the story or argument.
  - Demonstrates highly effective use of voice and selection of music.
  - Makes appropriate choice of language structure and demonstrates accurate use of grammar to support the chosen text type.
  - Clearly and articulately explains how and why they chose and sequenced pictures and soundtrack.

Source: [http://www.sydneyr.det.nsw.edu.au/support/abedequity/reg\\_equi/documents/PSP/Assessment-Tasks-and-Marking-Criteria.pdf](http://www.sydneyr.det.nsw.edu.au/support/abedequity/reg_equi/documents/PSP/Assessment-Tasks-and-Marking-Criteria.pdf)<sup>19</sup>

|                                | <b>Grade A</b>   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Story</b>               | There is a clear focus and purpose   |
| <b>Use of images and media</b> | The images and media create an atmosphere or tone that matches the story   |
| <b>Economy</b>                 | The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail throughout       |
| <b>Emotional content</b>       | The story clearly demonstrates engagement with the emotions of the creator |
| <b>Reflection</b>              | The creator has clearly reflected on the experience                        |

Source: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/><sup>20</sup>

However, even if the whole digital storytelling process is a very comprehensive and complex one, it is important not to make the assessment process overly complex. Moreover, paying attention to the context in which the story is used and to what end is also an essential element.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. [http://www.sydneyr.det.nsw.edu.au/support/abedequity/reg\\_equi/documents/PSP/Assessment-Tasks-and-Marking-Criteria.pdf](http://www.sydneyr.det.nsw.edu.au/support/abedequity/reg_equi/documents/PSP/Assessment-Tasks-and-Marking-Criteria.pdf) (10/10).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/> (10/10).

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## CHAPTER V DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

*Laura Malita*

### *1. Digital storytelling as a job finding learning process*

If in the previous chapter, the digital storytelling process was analyzed strictly from the educational point of view, in this chapter, the usage of the digital storytelling in the job finding process section will be presented, as well as how and what could be learnt from here.

Thus, a short overview about the current situation is presented and the developments in the use of digital storytelling for job search purposes in different examples are mentioned too. The lessons learned from each of the examples<sup>1</sup> presented for the L@Jost project and users are highlighted as well.

- Kathy Hansen<sup>2</sup> is exploring in an article posted on her blog the traditional and postmodern forms of storytelling and how online storytelling could be applied to the job-searching process, using ideas created by Donnie Claudino<sup>3</sup>, TechSoup Canada's Marketing Manager.

According to this article, good stories contain an affective, emotional component that shows your passion towards possible employers, they have a clear course of action and appeal and are made in such a way that they could be re-purposed according to different job applications. Further recommendations are knowing the market and the employer well before creating the story (this being a plus for every kind of job application) and to place the story once created on a personal homepage, but also on other places on the web; the story should always link back to the personal online space that must contain contact data in order to make it easy for potential employers to take immediate action if interested.

<sup>1</sup> The first one and partially the second example are from an unpublished L@jost workpackage report, developed by Simon Heid.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hansen K., *Applying Online Storytelling Techniques to the Job Search*, in <http://astoriedcareer.com/2009/07/applying-online-storytelling-t.html> (10/10).

<sup>3</sup> Claudino D., *Once Upon A Time: Storytelling in Online Media*, in <http://blog.techsoup.org/node/884> (10/10).

*Although the L@Jost project does not aim to collect stories for job application purposes directly, the recommendations provided in this article are also valuable for the project.*

- A very professional way of realising the basic ideas that are also followed in L@Jost is the icould platform<sup>4</sup>. icould is a free online resource, which offers an insight into real career stories told by real people, delivered through a website that contains a number of video stories between 2000 and 3000 and which are available for young people, students, career starter, career developer, career changer, careers' professional, parents, teachers, employers etc. Apart from video stories available on the platform, there are also more than 100 articles, all of them covering the same subject.

These stories are planned to be wide ranging, covering a whole spectrum of experiences, occupations and career and education pathways across all sectors of work. From telecoms engineers to police officers, from landscape gardeners to web designers, from engine drivers to zoo-keepers; they talk about what they do, what it's like, how they came to be where they are and their hopes for the future.

Its purpose is to inspire people who are in the middle of a job-searching process to think differently about their futures, by giving them a vivid insight into the working lives of real people in real jobs. Like the idea behind the L@jost project, *icould* is about inspiration and encouragement. By sharing successful stories with other people, it is aimed to help people discover their potential and talent, by showing how others have used theirs.

The platform is built around a mixed person-story centered approach and stories can be searched by articles, career stories, categories and tags. The videos are created in a highly professional way and it is unclear how the interviewed persons shown in the movies are selected. The users who access the website can see and learn how other people fit their opportunities and experiences to reach their achievement and success. However, the stories – as well as articles – present real issues too, such as problems at home, taking a year out, failing exams and coping with redundancy. Thus, the user will feel a sentiment of belonging to a community of people just like him/her.

*Registered users of the site can comment and discuss upon the stories, but they cannot upload their own stories, and this is what constitutes the main difference between icould and L@Jost.*

*However, although user-generated movies cannot reach the professional level aimed at in icould, the L@Jost project and L@Jost users can learn from certain techniques which are used in icould movies and take the platform as well as the movies as models.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. <http://icould.com/> (10/10).

- Another example that the L@jost users can use and from which they can learn about the job searching process, can be found in the online, free ebook named '100 Job Search Tips from FORTUNE 500 Recruiters'<sup>5</sup>. By accessing this easy-to-use book, the L@jost users will find and learn from important advisers what to do and what not to do during the job searching process and during the interviews. Thus, by reading this book, the job seekers will enter a world of recruiters. By doing so, they will learn what it takes to get a job. Thus, they will benefit from 100 real-time tips and stories shared by FORTUNE 500 recruiters and they will learn from 3 common mistakes made by job seekers from the point of view of each of the ten recruiters. The job seekers will also learn where the recruiters scan for candidates, what they like to see and what they recommend. Even though their recommendations and suggestions are made especially for the United States' citizens, most of their shared thoughts could be also useful for other job seekers. Among the most important issues they recommend, we can enumerate: network with known people, but also with unknown ones (even become an expert in social networking), joining professional and industry organizations, making use of career centers, researching companies and finding out about the top search professionals in the area of interest; how to create a strong CV, but also to be honest and to know how to promote yourself is another important issue which is presented.

Altogether it seems that online platforms and resources that are based around a combination of online storytelling and job search are still rare and L@Jost is filling a gap by offering a possibility to collect user-generated stories about successful job search processes. However, many internet users nowadays, being self-employed, regular employees or free-lancers, bloggers, hosts of their own personal web site or community members, are using the web actively to present themselves, building up digital identities, developing online CVs and ePortfolios and use these also for job search purposes. L@Jost, by explicitly addressing the topic, can offer an additional space for people who aim to present themselves in a professional way on the web as well as for students and job seekers aiming to learn more about job searching processes.

## 2. *ePortfolios that tell a story*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century's context of a knowledge and technological based society, where being information literate is a critical way to be prepared

<sup>5</sup> Cf. <http://www.emc.com/collateral/article/100-job-search-tips.pdf> (10/10).

for a more complex life and work environment, ePortfolios and digital storytelling are considered, among other tools, as web passport to success in the third millennium.<sup>6</sup>

According to Wikipedia's definition, 'an electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. E-portfolios are both demonstrations of the user's abilities and platforms for self-expression, and, if they are online, they can be maintained dynamically over time'.

However, like digital storytelling, ePortfolios are recognized as an effective way to engage the users in their learning process. Thus, in the education area, some types of ePortfolios are used: assessment ePortfolio, presentation ePortfolio, personal development ePortfolio or ePortfolio which demonstrate the continuity of learning.

Thus, ePortfolios can provide an opportunity to support one's ability to collect, organise, interpret and reflect on his/her learning and practice. It is also a tool for continuing professional development, encouraging individuals to take responsibility for and demonstrate the results of their own learning. Furthermore, a portfolio can serve as a tool for knowledge management, and is used as such by some institutions. The ePortfolios could be also used to provide a link between individual and organizational learning.

According to Malita and Martin<sup>7</sup>, by 'using Web 2.0 tools and technologies from today for the designing of ePortfolios 2.0, we can access them from anywhere, we can benefit from their interactivity characteristics, and we can be actively engaged and can develop lifelong learning and computational skills as they derive from the ePortfolios functions: free text input: annotations, online content editing, internal/external links, upload documents; publication: access control, types, publishing on the web, commenting, syndicate, internal/external communication, searching; organizing: collecting space/document management, categorization, selection, tracking; analysis tools: tracking, comparing, assessing; templates: advice, reflection, evaluation, presentation, modification of templates by user, assessment, flexibility and usability; knowledge capturing and sharing; community-wide reflection and communication; and knowledge collaboration'.

Taking into account the above presentation issues regarding the ePortfolio characteristics, Barrett<sup>8</sup> also considered that we can see an ePortfo-

<sup>6</sup> Malita L., Martin C., *Digital Storytelling as Web Passport to Success in the 21st Century*, «Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences», 2, 2010, pp. 3060-3064.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Barrett H.C., *Researching and Evaluating Digital Storytelling as a Deep Learning Tool*, in <http://electronicportfolios.org/portfolios/SITESTorytelling2006.pdf>, 2006, (09/10).

lio as a digital story or, in other words and context, that a digital story could be integrated into an ePortfolio.

Thus, even an ePortfolio (whatever is the purpose for which it was created) could reflect the voice and self-expression of the user, his/her creativity and potential for innovation, the communication and collaborations skills of the owner but also the capacities and abilities of the owner regarding his/her critical thinking skills, his/her capabilities of solving problems and making decisions.

Therefore, even the digital stories are considered to focus on reflection over time, and ePortfolios are considered as spaces for reflection, both of them could be used during the job searching process. Thus, in an innovative way, both of them could be used for dealing with the unemployment problem, for promoting the job seeker's talent, skills and potential; these issues are presented and intertwined even in the L@jost project.

### *3. Using stories to network to people and to construct pieces of the online reputation*

According to Merriam-Webster, one of the definitions of network is 'a usually informally interconnected group or association of persons (as friends or professional colleagues)' and according to the same source networking means 'the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions' and more *specifically* 'the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business'.

Even if those terms are sometimes confounded and used incorrectly, both of them are used and they refer to the personal relationship between individuals, no matter if they are colleagues, friends, family or competitors.

Networking has become extremely important in the recent years, and that is mainly the consequence of the usage explosion of the online social networks. People love to communicate through the social networks and this is reflected on the recent social networks usage statistics, where we can see that social networking is among the most forth online preferred activity<sup>9</sup>.

More than that, for job seekers the above statistics has a double importance as networking has been and continues to be the number one job search strategy. Thus, for those people it is important to understand that they can combine what is useful with a pleasant activity in order to achieve the most important goal regarding their professional activity: finding a (new) job. Therefore, it is not important with who are you networking and what types of network do you use, if there is a possibility to find a tip, a connection or an advice regarding a prospective job.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. [http://www.nielsen-online.com/pr/pr\\_090309.pdf](http://www.nielsen-online.com/pr/pr_090309.pdf) (10/10).

It is important to understand that in addition to job searching traditional way (by uploading a CV to one of the top job sites), in nowadays difficult economic times, people need to be actively online and to take advantage of the ways social media sites (apart from subscribing to a mailing list or to a discussion group) can enhance the job search process.

In order to have a broader perspective about importance of networking during the job search process, the job seekers must know that:

- Networking isn't about talking and talking. It's about building a community; it's about giving & teaching and listening & learning. It is also a way of building values and credibility in the professional community, of making new friends and connections, of helping others when they need it.
- Thus, networking is not a solo activity, networking means participation and engaging into the conversation.
- Before being proactive on a network, it is important to identify it and to create a list of contacts and update it frequently with the new names of people who might be useful at a certain moment.
- Related to the above mentioned point, it is also important to be prepared, to know before what information you need and which are your main goals for networking. Thus, it is essential to know yourself, your education, experiences, skills and competencies in order to include that information into a presentation, a biography or a CV, which will be then transmitted as your first identity for the respective network. Moreover, before being proactive on a network, you must know it, observe it for a while and wait until you are comfortable with the group before participating to the discussions. Before you start participating actively, be sure you read over and know the rules of networking netiquette and FAQ associated with that network.
- A polite attitude and being professional are also two important issues which are required on a network. Moreover, you must double check for grammar and spelling errors before sending a message to the network. If the message is addressed only to a specific person, it is important to be sure you will contact the person directly and not through the list/network.
- It is also preferable that your message would be a concise one, not to contain your resume or phrases like "please help me find a job". It is important to see this network like a part of your long-term career plan and consequently, to try to establish an ongoing relationship.
- Therefore, ask your networking prospects for advices, not for a job. According to Denham<sup>10</sup> 'your networking meetings should be a source

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Denham T., *The 8 Keys to Networking*, in <http://blog.timesunion.com/careers/the-8-keys-to-networking/348/>, 2010, (09/10).

of career information, advice and contacts. Focus on asking one thing at a time'. It is important also to be patient and politely. If you don't hear back from someone for a few days or a week, then you can politely try to contact them again, especially if this is an ongoing conversation.

Taking into account the above mentioned advantages regarding the networking activities for unemployed people, it is important to understand that online networking is just as difficult as face-to-face networking and it is still a two-way street with an ongoing conversation between the person who asks and the person who answers.

'Why would anyone network with me?' and 'Why would anyone take a time from his/her schedule to network with me?' are frequent questions which appear in the case of people who have been unemployed for a long time and who have lost their self-esteem. There are several possible answers to those questions, such as:

- Most people love to talk about their jobs and are willing to give realistic and free answers.
- There are people naturally inclined to help, even persons you do not know and probably will never get to know.
- The person was in the same situation and wants to "give back" and to help other people with advices, according with his/her experiences. This is very useful for people who are in similar situations and who will benefit from past experiences, who will learn to repeat good practices and will also learn to avoid making the same mistakes.
- The motivation of seeing you could be also self serving, a tactic to pre-screen you without the pressure of a job interview, but in order to use the information obtained for other purposes.
- Maybe among the respondents there are some managers or recruiters who are not prepared to employ somebody, but this being their job, they can keep in their data base the candidates they consider best.

Consequently, your online reputation and everything related to it, all your online activities count now and they will count in the future as well. Therefore, it is also important to know what to do and what not to do during networking meetings. Thus, according to Denham<sup>11</sup>, there some possible questions to ask, such as:

- What do you like most (least) about your work?
- Can you describe a typical workday or week?
- What type of education and experience do you need in order to remain successful in this field?

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

- What are the future career opportunities in this field?
- What are the challenges in balancing your work and your personal life?
- Why do people enter/leave this field or company?
- What advice would you give to someone trying to enter on this field?
- With whom would you recommend to speak?

But perhaps the most important thing to remember regarding the networking is that opportunities sometimes come when we least expect them. Moreover, even if it is only a sentence that circulated in this field, meaning “80% of the jobs available never get advertised”, for sure there is some truth here.

Thus, both networking and online reputation are important, especially in the fields where there is a big unemployment rate. Thus, according to Kelly Pate<sup>12</sup> ‘friends, friends of friends, a barber, a neighbor and former co-workers are often the best resources for job seekers, especially in a market with far more people out of work than job openings, job placement experts say’.

Therefore, taking into account the nowadays global economic situation it is more important for an unemployed to know and use every available means in order to enter on the labor market.

Thus, by using digital storytelling in the L@jost project, people will have a concrete opportunity for networking and creating a personal branding, a marketing for promoting oneself. On the one hand, this is important for them to promote themselves (because even employers, even recruiters are now scanning a person regarding also his/her online activity), but on the other hand it is also essential for learning by doing and discovering from the reactions of the audience regarding their shared story, from the audience’s active participation through feedbacks and comments and from the way they will respond to them.

#### *4. New skills for new jobs – the L@jost Connection*

Taking into consideration the previous chapter, where 21<sup>st</sup> century skills related to career development and employability are presented, in the following section the connection between them and the L@jost project will be emphasized.

Moreover, according to “New skills for new jobs”, report, education, training and jobs are inseparable – there is a relation of interdependence between them and each of them will have an omnipresent ICT component.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. «Denver Post», March, 30, 2003.



When viewed together, both the ePortfolios and the digital stories tell us the bigger story of our time about finding a job, in different domains and countries. Thus, according to Malita e Martin<sup>13</sup>.

‘Through digital storytelling, students begin to comprehend how all the elements of writing a narrative work together and how to manipulate them for the best effects in readers and viewers. Also, digital stories that are created and have had hard work put into them, could be shared. The sharing and evaluating of digital stories among peers is an excellent way to foster self-expression and tolerance, and to create an engaged community of learners. In a collaborative and somehow new learning environment, students are actively engaged in the exchange of ideas, asking for and receiving feedback, the learning in an informal and, concomitantly, in a familiar way about their topics of interest, from peers, (older) colleagues. Thus, through digital storytelling students develop communication skills, learn to ask questions, express opinions, construct narratives and write for an audience, also improving their language and computer skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia: text, images, audio, video and web publishing. When digital stories are created, students not only become more technologically literate, but they also become designers, listeners, interpreters, readers, writers, communicators, artists, and thinkers’.

In addition, according with the same source, by using ePortfolios, students who are going to graduate and are looking for a job, as well as students who have recently graduated and are still unemployed or the ones who have recently became unemployed, can develop

‘lifelong learning and computational skills as they derive from the ePortfolios functions: free text input (annotations, online content editing, internal/external links, upload documents), publication (access control, types, publish to web, commenting, syndicate, internal/external communication, searching; organize: collecting space/document management, categorization, selection, tracking), analysis tools (tracking, comparing, assessment; templates: advice, reflection, evaluation, presentation, modification of templates by user, assessment, flexibility and usability; knowledge capturing and sharing; community-wide reflection and communication; and knowledge collaboration’.

Moreover, the shared positive and negative experiences in the Web 2.0 L@jost project social community are *resources of learning and inspiration* for students who are going to graduate and are looking for a job, as well as students who have recently graduated and are still unemployed or the ones who have recently became unemployed from all over Europe in their attempt of finding a job.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Malita L., Martin C., op. cit.

However, in the project social community, students who are going to graduate and are looking for a job, as well as students who have recently graduated and are still unemployed or who have recently become unemployed, ALUMNI and universities, as well as employment & recruitment agencies and employers, the direct beneficiaries (the above-mentioned categories of students) will develop a plethora of *long-term career skills* as Europe2020 strategy presents: communication skills, learning to ask questions, express opinions, reflect & rethink, construct narratives and write for an audience, improving language and computer skills.

In addition to that, using the project social community as medium, the direct beneficiaries will also have concrete opportunity to creating a *personal branding*, a way of marketing for promoting oneself. Therefore, in addition to the above presented issues, through the main outputs of the project (the both guides) and activities we intend to equip as many people as the partnership can with such kind of *transversal* strategic job finding skills, knowledge and competencies, as *core life and employability skills*. In order to acquire those kinds of skills & competencies, more cross curricular and innovative approaches such as learning-by-doing, learning by stealth, learning through experience or project based learning would be necessary, these methods being listed as among the most effective learning methods for professionalization and stimulating creativity and innovation.

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## CHAPTER VI HOW DIGITAL STORYTELLING CAN HELP YOU GET A JOB

Vanna Boffo

Each life is an encyclopedia, a library,  
an inventory of objects, a series of styles,  
and everything can be constantly  
reshuffled and reordered  
in every way.

Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next  
Millennium*

### 1. *From study to work*<sup>1</sup>

Looking for work by talking about yourself: this is the aim of using storytelling. Because, in reality, life is a great tapestry that tells stories. It might seem premature for young people to tell their stories. Instead, they are seeped in emotions and feelings which are also our guides in human life. Therefore, we cannot help but think that not only does everyone's life unfurl like a narrative plot, but we *are* our stories, as Bruner underlined clearly in all his latter works<sup>2</sup>.

It was precisely Bruner who in a famous article from 1991, published in the journal «Critical Inquiry», and entitled *The Narrative Construction of Reality*<sup>3</sup>, claimed that a subject's mind builds the sense of reality, that is, it is aware of the relationship between the subject and the world through the mediation of the cultural dimensions given by language, first of all, but also by other symbolic modes of representation, such as vision or iconic representation. Storytelling is one of the modes of symbolic representation through

<sup>1</sup> Our thanks go to the students and professional figures who took part in the project and made it possible to perform the research: Gabriella Campanile, Elena Cioni, Barbara Lorieri, Chiara Michelizzi, Daniela Musacchio, Germana Savastano, Giuseppe Troina. Without their fine and enthusiastic work it would not have been possible to provide empirical evidence for the theoretical arguments.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bruner J., *Acts of Meaning*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1990; Id., *The Culture of Education*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1996; Id., *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Bruner J., *The Narrative Construction of Reality*, in «Critical Inquiry», 18, 1991, pp. 1-21.

which children, first of all, and then all human beings, in the various stages of their lives, develop their awareness of themselves and the world. By using words, which unfurl into a meaningful and structured story, men, all men, give sense and meaning to the reality that surrounds them. Indeed, reality itself becomes such because narrative *about* the world and *in* the world becomes the key to accessing every person's internal and external experiences, it becomes the *mode* of explanation, it becomes the explanation itself, the meaning itself. However, it is not just a matter of the explanation or the story told, whatever it may be, coinciding with the meaning because upon its construction it moulds, develops and forges it. By doing so, the explanation superimposes itself, the explanation itself becomes the thought and the mind that guides human actions. This development and this forging generates the form of man, and this form indeed coincides with the story that gives sense, and gives meaning. The form becomes meaningful, the story told becomes the interpretation of life itself, it is life and its form.

In this way every subject's formation is contextual to the way in which every person tells their story and narrative. What is more, the form of every subject is the way in which they tell their narrative, or tell themselves. Without these premises, it would be difficult to fully understand the need to create innovative roads for young people, whether with a degree of not, to follow to enter the world of work.

Therefore, work and storytelling, not just meaning adopting autobiographical practices, but setting up a gateway for access to work and the professional sphere through life stories, or rather, by telling our own stories, but also through listening and dialogue, conversation and communication. It is a matter of bringing our own story into play so it can become part of a scheme in which our own formation plays a full part.

The methodology that is presented here is prompted by the vital passage that every young person has to fulfil when they finish their secondary school or university studies and have to look for a job. This is a delicate phase, little researched, because it is overshadowed by narratives of adolescence or of adulthood already achieved. Instead, the period when we look for a profession is a fragile and precious time, and particularly liquid, just like the society that the young people find themselves entering. And this is even more the case in the present day.

Besides, the job search process does not start when our studies finish, but a long time before that, when we choose our university degree, when we listen to the voice inside our soul which only apparently does not seem to be there. Indeed, it appears that our choices are dictated by other things. Instead, the deepest part of our self speaks and, by telling its story, it acts intentionally. There, in those gaps in thought, the voice to follow makes itself heard.

Within the roads enforced by the economic situation or the conventions of family tradition, there is still room for the desire to choose, for

the urge to finally find a job. The search for a profession starts early in young people and teenagers, even though it may take a very long time to reach maturity. Rarely when looking for a job do we stop to think about aspects of our self and subjectivity which, through work, emerge to give shape to this search and to form the person continuing their life course.

At least two different levels of methodological reconnaissance overlap for scholars who reflect on these issues. Suffice it to think the scholars who accompany the young people by giving them careers advice, those who devise counselling services, laboratories and competence assessment services, careers advisors or even more frequently teachers who follow the education and, therefore, the formation of the young people aspiring to become professionals. Therefore, on one hand, it is important to resolve the sticking points in the reflection on the relationship between building the self and looking for a job, and on the other, it is fundamental for adults to organise the best service to help young people find their way in the working world and to allow employers and job seekers to meet.

By following these two directions, we have come up with a careers advice and job search project which the following gives a report of. However, before presenting the path that was followed, it is important to understand the theoretical basis to the project.

## 2. *Communicating, remembering, storytelling*

As Mikhail Bakhtin highlighted clearly<sup>4</sup>, no communication takes place without an interlocutor, or rather, no dialogue happens in a void, and the person speaking always takes the interlocutor into account, through their attitudes, the questions they ask, their thought and/or expressed judgement, their proactive or distancing behaviour. It means that communication is never neutral, whether using the written, or the spoken word. Of course, when we speak of digital writing too, the oral communication model is present in the bond linking the speaker and the listener, the writer and the reader. The person addressed is a fundamental pivot in the communicative relationship; without the objective, in other words the interlocutor, the communication does not take place.

Communicating is an exchange, we could also say a gift of our words or ideas of ourselves to the person who is listening, and, through listening, dialogical support and sense can be given to what is said. Communication leads to the creation of a combined line of meanings that helps

<sup>4</sup> For an introduction to the thinking of Mikhail Bakhtin it could be useful to consult: Todorov, T., *Mikhail Bakhtin: the Dialogical Principle*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984; Bakhtin M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

to link the speaker and the listener. This is what lies at the basis of the possibility to receive the message. Not just information, but a direction, an understanding, an uncovering of the deepest reasons for dialogue.

Nevertheless, what we are interested in here is the possibility for communication to become storytelling. Indeed, one could say that communication is intrinsic to storytelling. In a good book, Jedlowski states: 'A story is a discourse about certain facts, but, to the extent it appears in a story, it passes between one subject and another, it is realised within a relationship and helps to create it'<sup>5</sup>.

So *communicating*, *storytelling* and *remembering* are human deeds that are indissolubly linked and represent sides of the same coin. Communication is always a type of storytelling with particular characteristics, which implies the action of remembering if the sense of the narrative is told in a particular direction, free from reflective opacity. Stories and narrative show the need to make ourselves heard, to be understood, to be accepted by the world. We tell stories in the same way we communicate out of the need for recognition and to build social relations. It is precisely through communication that becomes narrative that the person is unveiled and a truth is shown.

For all these reasons, telling narratives and stories are important actions in man's life, but even more so for those who, uncertain of their future, are in the process of opening themselves up towards the world to confirm their existence. In this sense, digital stories bear witness to our being there. In effect, a young man or woman's story becomes not just the way of introducing themselves, but also the way of getting across and unveiling their person. In addition to this, it is necessary to consider that when we write we become detached from ourselves, so what we have thought takes a different dimension. Writing and the detachment that it creates between us and the word allow us to draw up a different sense and meaning from what we would find by simply speaking.

A written narrative, created using the tool of writing, gives us and allows us to discover a dimension that otherwise we would not be able to look into. This is why professional vocational narratives not only allow us to discover the other, but also ourselves, our inner self, our motivation. Writing allows us to build a metacognitive relationship with our deepest intentionalities. Writing allows us to set in motion a mentalising sense of our own life; a reflection *about* the mind, *in* the mind and *with* the mind of the other. The mental relationship that emerges through writing is also emotive and even physical. It is precisely Jerome Bruner,

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jedlowski P., *Storie comuni. La narrazione nella vita quotidiana*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2000, p. 25. Unfortunately, this book is not available in English. However, the particular topic he deals with through his analysis of everyday stories makes it one of the clearest volumes at the international level on using narratives to transform the subject's life.

in a text from 1992, *Acts of Meaning*, who claims the importance of writing in the search for the very sense of our life<sup>6</sup>.

In *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*<sup>7</sup>, Jack Mezirow, an interesting scholar of formative processes in adults, upholds the reflective capacity of writing in adulthood. If we understand the plots crossing through our lives, we understand the minds of the others who we have come into contact with. There is a circular nature to this reflection, this search.

Hence, we cannot separate our professional life from the rest of our life, because our life form is built both culturally and in the most intimate part of the self. Self-knowledge leads to wellbeing. The problem of formation lies at the centre of our life story and it is only at the end, when we read back the path we have followed, that we can become aware of the scheme that has come into being. In this sense, the challenge is to perceive our life story while its path is being traced and to create the tools in order to be able to read it.

### 3. *Self-telling*

The *self-telling* project gradually became a personal and relational advice strategy, first of all involving personal contact and then a writing experience. This writing experience then took shape as an interview summarising the exchanges that had taken place between the adults included in the advice experience or a video interview recorded using a video camera.

A group comprising five students from the Teacher Training Degree course in Adult Education Science at the University of Florence, Faculty of Education Sciences, and the same number of freelancers from the socio-educational sector embarked on a journey towards a deeper knowledge and understanding of the profession they carry out. One could say that it was a journey towards the world of work. A journey observed from the increasingly clear perspective of approaching the deep-seated problems that cannot be separated from any job/profession.

The most important feature of the eight-month experience was perhaps the possibility it gave for in-depth communication. Upon looking back over the whole span of the project, it was noticed how, beyond job placement which was the driving force behind setting up the project, and beyond the careers advice which indeed proved to be one of the objectives, it was important for the participants to tell the stories of their

<sup>6</sup> Bruner J., *Acts of Meaning*, cit.

<sup>7</sup> Mezirow J., *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1991.

working lives. The stories offered by those taking part were able to provide a good starting point to help the students find their way and enter the world of work; they not only provided the means for the students and professionals to get to know each other, but also reciprocal formation through a dialogue that reflected both parties. This joint, one-to-one formation proved to be a 'middle-earth', a bridge between very different existential, social, cultural and human situations. These exchanges subsequently became a preferential route for the participants to grasp the depth of motivations in looking for a job and, thanks to the awareness acquired, to understand the meaning of looking for work, what to do to look for a job and how to go about it.

Therefore, on one hand the communication between the two groups - the students and the professionals - highlighted the importance of participatory and empathetic listening to achieve reciprocal contact, to learn from each other, to bring out the dialogue and transform it into a learning path. This type of communication proved to be a communication that formed<sup>8</sup> and educated those involved, generating new forms of being. Indeed, the dialogue between the students and professionals happened in various forms, first of all in personal meetings, followed by an intense exchange of emails, leading up to an interview or a video interview at the end of the project. The relationship which reciprocally came into being between the subjects allowed us to enter the education professionals' working lives favoured by in-depth observation. The professionals were able to tell orally and in writing using digital tools not only their stories, but also the difficulties, the obstacles, the interruptions and unexpected events along the way.

From a second observation point, another feature of the different forms of exchange between the two groups was the possibility to build a path of self-formation in search of the self. With the oral narrative, the exchange of emails and the video recording, each person was able to observe and highlight unknown parts of their self. Unexplored aspects of the self, unconscious attitudes and concealed behaviour are elements that, in their frantic everyday life, every adult forgets about in the basement of their memory. Though unexpected, the formative meetings helped to reactivate forgotten states of the self. It rekindled reflections left in remote corners of the memory, but above all, the formative side to the storytelling and the meetings allowed the participants to understand shady areas that had never been explored before.

The formative communication and self-educative relationships impacted on the dimension of care of the self and the other. The practice of sto-

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Watzlawick P., Beavin D., Jackson J., *Pragmatics of Human Communication. A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies and Paradoxes*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1967.



ytelling had a role in supporting the self in this dialogical search for the reasons for a particular career path and the hidden needs in the choice of a profession. In this way, the participants in this sort of permanent laboratory were able to try to search for their selves together, through the exchanged, given and received word. While all the subjects involved in the art of telling their stories may have had in exchange an intense formation experience regarding work and the significance of doing a profession, the most fruitful, but also the truest outcome of the experience was the resulting care for the self and for the other. Without being fully aware of the care practices that came into being through the storytelling, relational wellbeing strategies were put into practice which had a profound effect on the participants' reciprocal openness and the stories offered in exchange.

#### *4. Meeting the professionals*

The series of meetings between students and professionals came about as a job placement and careers advice activity as part of the Teacher Training Degree Course in Adult Education Science, Ongoing Training and Pedagogical Science at the University of Florence at the beginning of 2009. The context within which the series of meeting took place was a Leonardo da Vinci European Project on Lifelong Learning called L@jost, the acronym for *Learn about finding jobs from digital storytelling*. The aim of the meetings was to:

- build a relationship between the students and the professionals;
- draft digital stories of working careers;
- test out the reciprocity of digital storytelling dialogue as a possible tool for careers advice and looking for a job.

The resulting advice was both to guide the students in all the questions that they could ask the professionals, but also to enable a dialogue on an equal footing.

A professional working life narrative could become, in the end, a personal life story. The means used was digital storytelling. In this project the consideration given to the figure of mentor was important. According to Socrates, the mentor is a person who should have both the student's guidance and their freedom at heart. The work was the opportunity to sum up professional life both in terms of telling and listening to the self.

As has already been highlighted, the students and professionals accepted to undertake a reciprocal exchange regarding a professional formative experience. The students were selected on a voluntary basis and in the end were all students from the degree course that had promoted the initiative. The professionals were also chosen on a voluntary basis, from

the lists of graduates from the University of Florence Specialist Degree Course in Adult Education Science and Ongoing Training. After broad discussion, the following means were decided upon: e-mail, blogs, chat or skype, mobile phones, photos, video and audio.

E-mails were chosen as the basic tool, even though the communication is synchronic, because it is the most simple and in common use. Which communication tool should be used was subject to discussion because the work was planned by a team and using the technological skills that it was assumed all those taking part in the project could deal with. During the project, other means of Internet communication were also used, like blogs and skype.

The fundamental means used in the exchanges between students and professionals was writing, for telling stories and narratives of the self.

Nevertheless, we know that the stories and narratives told depends greatly on the means used. Some problems arose due to the length of the messages, time delays and contents.

The outline for the questions to ask the professionals was drawn up from a questionnaire aimed at all those taking part. The fundamental conceptual points that formed the structure for the writing project began from some central topics:

1. The professionals' schooling and studies
2. The job search period
3. How the company and/or institution worked for looks for new employees
4. Meeting the company
5. Decisive factors in their hiring
6. The professional's work experience: skills, competences, capacities.

These focal points were used to lead the written dialogue first of all, and then the spoken dialogue later on during the interview.

A last important point to underline is the *community* that came into being, in the manner of a community of practice<sup>9</sup>. The manifest growth of a community and group was transferred to what was learnt about the working world, the pre-conceptions that often hinder the job search along a particular path and the personal questions we want to answer while going in search of work.

The community's job placement research highlighted that the stories narrate how much work is linked to the life of each subject/individual/per-

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Wenger E, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Lave J., Wenger E, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

son. A profession is not only a means for living and surviving in the world, but is a way of expressing ourselves, a way of claiming our existence, a way of knowing and acknowledging ourselves, a way of telling the world about ourselves, in a crucial relational exchange. As a result, the labour market crisis that has gripped all Western countries since the end of 2007 is more than a 'work' or a 'professional' crisis. It is instead a crisis that has affected man's very reason for being and, above all, the reason for being and existing as mature citizens responsible for the young generations. If these considerations are not at the basis of every adult professional's thoughts, all reflections on jobs, starting work and careers advice will be empty, groundless and evanescent. It can be said that the work crisis has clearly highlighted the crisis of the Western subject. In a certain sense, creating a digital job search space aimed at young university leavers who find themselves, for the first time, faced with a market with shapeless and confused outlines, led to reflection on the sense of Western man, on the sense of social behaviour and actions, and on the sense of building a professional culture<sup>10</sup>.

Careers advice and looking for a job also require a high degree of democracy and sense of social citizenship. Without the latter aspects, no search and no professional relationship will give the *technological* man of the future the sense of living. Without this, as adults, we will have rid the young people of today of their future.

### 5. *The stories told*

The stories presented below are the result of the work carried out in around eight months of meetings, written exchanges and video recordings. The means were provided by multimedia, but the tool used most intensively was the written or spoken word. The word is the means of communication that really represented its internal sense: it was the manifestation of continual giving in a rich and engaging course of formation, which no one had imagined before beginning the writing stage. The laboratories that came into being with the students were always dense with observations and really did result in a process of cognitive and professional growth. The students' exchanges with the professionals led to a real course of career and job search advice.

The material presented here is the final part of the laboratory and individual work performed by the participants in the community. On paper it is not possible to present the intense video interviews which revealed the sense of looking for work.

<sup>10</sup> Baumann Z., *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 2004.

The professionals interviewed had some traits in common. These not only included considering their studies important after obtaining their degree, but also recognition that they had regained their self-esteem through their work and awareness of having suitable knowledge to live their social, economic and therefore their emotional and sentimental lives to the full.

The stories narrate that in Italy access to the labour market in the last twenty years has not been easy, and that access for women is more difficult than for men. The stories also tell of meandering career paths, in which the figure of a mentor was decisive to approaching the world of professional work and deciding which career to follow. Some interesting passages are given by the competences needed to access the knowledge sector. Indeed, the professionals telling their stories come from certified courses of study in the social, humanist and educational fields. Some of the competences that most frequently appear among the interviewees are their relationships with themselves and with the context that might appear at a particular time, flexible thinking and the ability to shift from their convictions. Finally, although many other aspects can be highlighted, at this point it is interesting to underline that one of the aims of creating these vocational stories is for the publication of personal stories on a website dedicated to looking for a first job.

The third feature of the research was that the students learnt to get to the bottom of the issue. Getting to the bottom meant understanding that to enter the job market it is necessary not to be disheartened, sometimes it is necessary to put our desires on the shelf and courageously accept the future we are offered. For an Italian student this is not simple. Nevertheless, this contact with the professional figures strengthened their ability to deal with defeat and opened new horizons made up of unusual, but fascinating jobs. By looking at a successful and conscious direct experience, the students were able to deal with the personal problem of crossing over to a new world.

*The Story of Gabriella Campanile, aged 50*  
*Livorno, Italy*  
*Masters in Pedagogy*

by Daniela Musacchio<sup>11</sup>

Dr<sup>12</sup> Gabriella Campanile is a consultant for small and medium-sized businesses (SMIs).

<sup>11</sup> Daniela Musacchio is a student on the Teacher Training Degree Course in Adult Education Science and Ongoing Training. She has a three-year degree in Developmental Psychology.

<sup>12</sup> The title Dr is used denote the Italian title of 'dottore', meaning having a university degree.

Her career can certainly be defined by this keyword: ‘adult education’. Her encounter with education sciences happened almost by chance, seeing as her study interests and her professional goals at the time were directed towards psychological disciplines. So it was during her university studies at what was then the Faculty of Pedagogy that she became interested in studying adult education. It was here that she chose her present professional career.

The other aspect, and hence the other keyword that has characterised her career, is entrepreneurship and self-entrepreneurship.

This journey has seen many stages, all of them important, which have taken her today to consultancy in the training area for SMIs.

Her professional career began in social services. By chance she became the supervisor of the CGIL (left-wing trade union) people with disabilities office in her city. This experience, on a voluntary basis, was actually the beginning of her profession as a trainer. More specifically, the relationships and interests she cultivated at that time in social work enabled her to access an 800-hour trainer’s training course, the first stage of a community project in the social work field. She wound up performing a double role: classroom tutor and also student.

This first professional experience in the training field was the start of her career as a freelance project manager, tutor and subsequently teacher. Dr Campanile did social work through training agencies for about three or four years.

Another important stage was her appointment to the training sector and the area of programming community policies and economic development at the Provincial Administration, a job in which lasted for about two years. Then she and other colleagues she had met through her work decided to set up a training agency. She started on a business project and tested her capabilities, in the capacity of manager, in management functions. This experience lasted 10 years. What she still today likes to call her ‘agency’ was definitely a place for professional and training growth, which brought her to her present role as a consultant for businesses.

The competences necessary to become a consultant were acquired in the field, and also by studying. To complete her training, she had to take specialisation courses at training companies outside Tuscany and do a lot of studying. Then experience in the union environment, in businesses and in public administration, but above all in the ASFORM training agency, were the keystones of her training.

Dr Campanile started a course in Italian for foreigners. This was her first job right after university. She got there through friends and acquaintances, and tends to underline this aspect greatly. The more informal networks there are in order to enter the local productive social work fabric, the greater the chances are to access this information and to apply in order to participate.

The competences acquired right after her degree were different from the competences needed today. After she received her degree, the first thing to do, even before research, was to understand what she wanted to do, meaning what she could give in terms of knowledge and competences to a potential customer, hence to understand her characteristics, taking stock of her competences. Then she had to ask herself what her professional aspirations were, check to see what her personal ‘backpack’ was and understand the gap between what she had at that point and her aspirations. This meant wondering if the gap could be filled or not, and if it could not be filled then understanding what could actually be done both by training and by actual steps in the professional world.

When Dr Campanile finished university she had not really decided what she wanted to do and had no work orientation. Thanks to past experience she had learned to know herself and test herself. She ended up being a freelance professional a little by accident, then she made her choice because she began to know herself, so by becoming aware she had the capabilities and the potential, she decided to continue along this track.

She started teaching by chance. At first it did not go well, then little by little she learned from her failures and refined her technique. When she began, she felt that she had good capabilities in group management, so she dived in.

Good training for trainers is definitely important in order to teach; reading is important too, and not just for the specific topics of the teaching post. In addition to transmitting knowledge, capabilities must be developed and then it must be passed on how to achieve them.

The end result of training must always be taken into consideration. In the classroom if you have to teach a module on communication, for example; you must think about what the students will have learned at the end of those 4 hours. The intervention must be structured, and there, says Dr Campanile, ‘You can judge your capability for planning, because if you succeed in planning/building your model for teaching, you will have more success.’

A trainer is responsible for providing content, as well as being able to use teaching tools so that knowledge becomes power. Training plays on this. This is the methodological aspect that needs to be taken care of.

Extensive experience must be gained in tutoring before starting to teach. The trainer/teacher must be able to move freely and know a little bit about everything. This does not mean being a know-it-all, it means knowing how to link to other topics; like, for example, having a knowledge of regulations.

Dr Campanile is a consultant for SMIs. She collaborates with her main customer, which is the Sophia training agency at CNA (National Confederation of Artisans) in Prato. A professional network already existed, because earlier she had collaborated as a manager of the ASFORM training agency. Today, however, she works on her own.

The university as it was before did not prepare her for her present profession. The degree in education was reformed and many things have changed since then. At that time, adult training was shapeless.

Lastly, Dr Campanile listed the capabilities that, in her opinion, are necessary in order to work freelance. It is important to have determination, the ability to step forward and propose an idea and a project to a customer, the clarity of what one is and what one can give, namely the ability to adapt to various situations.

Concluding, the advice she would like to give to students is that they should understand what they possess and what they are lacking in order to achieve their professional goal.

Then study, study, study, be determined and self-critical (but not too much) and be quite creative, because after all this is very creative work.

*The Story of Chiara Michelizzi, aged 27*  
*Milan, Italy*

*Degree in Science of Infancy*  
*Masters in Adult Education*

by Daniela Musacchio

Dr Michelizzi's training began early, with her choice of high school, which turned out to be fundamental for her later choices. She attended the Socio Psico Pedagogico Lyceum (senior high school specializing in didactics and education) in Pisa, discovering a passion for pedagogy, in particular during the age of development. Then she came to Florence, choosing the three-year degree in the Science of Infancy. Once she received her degree she decided to change her route, maintaining her passion for education. She attended specialisation degree courses in Adult Education Science and Ongoing Training, also working at a Livorno crèche where she was co-manager of the newborn section. In November 2006 she was awarded her degree with a thesis on study circles. After her degree she participated in the Pisa state competition for nursery school teachers and in the meantime began an internship at the Province of Pisa employment centre in the pre-selection office.

This is where she became acquainted with the world of businesses and companies, human resources and orientation. At a certain point she had to make a choice. After just one internship she realised that the world of training, above all in the business world, fascinated her. At that point she decided on further specialisation, attending a 90-hour part-time masters course at «Il Sole 24 ORE» in Training Management, where she mainly learned how to do training in businesses. In June 2007, the internship in the province had finished. One day in July she answered an ad in Il

Sole 24 ORE for a tutor for two full-time masters; she sent off her curriculum and a few weeks later she was in Milan for the interview, which went well. She has worked in the Business School at Il Sole 24 ORE's training division since September 2007. She has done 12 months of internship and as of October she will have a fixed term contract expiring in September 2011.

She deals with masters courses in the marketing and communications area, such as: the Marketing and Communications, Media Relations and Tourism Economy and Management masters courses. The teachers of these masters courses are made up of business professionals and several university professors. After 5 months in the classroom the contract contemplates 4 months of internship and her work, in addition to following classroom work, teachers and lesson plans, is to follow classroom placement. They start from the interests of the single participants, then book interviews based on a candidate's preferences.

I would define her training/professional career with the following keywords: constancy – she never stopped studying or working after achieving her degree, the world of work waits for no one; humility; listening – take nothing for granted, always listen and absorb everything like a sponge. Once she received her degree, Dr Michelizzi sent her curriculum to every company that had a human resources division. She completed application forms on institutional sites, she sent e-mails to generic addresses for personnel selection, she sent her curriculum by fax or post. Furthermore she enrolled on work search engines – INFOJOBS and MONSTER – that send out newsletters with the parameters that the candidate sets up. She set no limits for her searches and the newsletters that came in were for Tuscany, Pisa and Florence. In addition to all this, she registered on the lists of the employment centre which, after an orientation interview, helps to set up a curriculum and to understand which sector the person would like to work in. On an internal database, she came top of the employment centre lists and was selected when a position in line with her profile appeared.

What was most important for Dr Michelizzi was to succeed in actually working in training and to finally use her degree in Adult Education Science and Ongoing Training and her Masters in Training Management. It was not important how (the type of contract) or where (geographical location). What counted was the organisation: serious, 'important' and significant, and for two reasons. The first reason: for her commitment while studying, the aim of doing things quickly and well was transferred to work, which was the goal she wanted to achieve. The second reason was the need for experience to put on her curriculum, to guarantee her a future or to be a guarantee on the job market. There were various interviews between receiving her degree and the work she is doing today. To begin the internship in the Province, she spoke with the



person in charge of the pre-selection office, where they were searching for a resource. Later she had an interview with a temping agency in Pisa, where she was offered an initial internship and then a contract. She refused, for fear of getting too focussed on that sector. Later she even tried outside Tuscany: in Milan with a consultancy company. She was not accepted because of her poor knowledge of English. Finally there was the interview where she was accepted by «Il Sole 24 ORE». First with human resources, the interview was of a cognitive type: she spoke of her previous experiences, her degree, her masters course. Then immediately afterwards, an interview with the woman in charge of the area she works with in which she was asked for more technical information regarding the masters area she would be managing: marketing and communications. Through search engines she received many offers for internships, an average of twenty per week. Entering her Specialist Degree regarding her sector in her curriculum and in the search parameters, proved quickly to be useful.

What was important for Dr Michelizzi was to start working, even small jobs, which could enrich her degree and make her 'stronger' and easier to place. She felt that a degree is immediately useful in finding work, but that after a while work experience makes all the difference. A university degree, above all with a specialisation, is fundamental in this sector because the study course can give you knowledge of a series of very important dynamics in training and selection, such as the reference targets, the assets of the moment and the route that research has been travelling in recent years. In her opinion it is fundamental to know the sector one wants to work in, get as much information as possible, know which structure does what, and which is more expert in what.

She certainly had support from her family and from the outside, from the employment centre. According to Dr Michelizzi, university does not actually prepare people for the world of work. She feels that it is not even their duty. But it should at least guarantee knowledge of the opportunities that this degree guarantees, by giving names of the companies, entities, businesses and consultants to apply to. Furthermore, she believes that there is a complete lack of real knowledge of how a company is structured; an organisation chart should be studied.

The capabilities that Dr Michelizzi deems necessary for performing this work undoubtedly concern relationships, since there is constant daily contact with masters students, teachers, spokespersons, suppliers and other company divisions. We must be patient, because it takes a lot of time before masters courses are actually planned, but the passion for training is repaid from the very start because we see the birth of a masters and a programme from the beginning to the end. Her advice to her students is never to think you are not up to a job, a business or a project. Just be humble and believe in yourself...always!

*The Story of Barbara Lorieri, aged 40*  
*Massa, Italy*  
*Degree in Education Science*

by Germana Savastano<sup>13</sup>

The professional path of Dr Barbara Lorieri might be similar in some ways to the ones of other professionals like her. When we look at it in detail though, we realise that her life experience sets an example for all young students who are about to enter the professional world after having spent years taking exams, researching in laboratories and taking part in work experience and other student programmes.

After having successfully concluded her scientific studies in school, Dr Barbara Lorieri started her university degree in Architecture in Florence. She managed to successfully pass fifteen exams within the first two years. In the summer break of that same year Barbara took a job in a boutique in the renowned location of Forte Dei Marmi on the Tuscan coast in order to save up some money. It was a time of great inspiration for her, and when she came back she took a sudden and unexpected decision: to interrupt her studies at university. The reasons behind this choice were multiple, but the main one was that she had realised she had lost interest in the subject she was studying. It was Barbara's first failure, and her parent's first disappointment. This disappointment proved to be very difficult to deal with considering she valued their consideration and their judgement a lot. Barbara in fact had never had anyone to direct her in her professional choices apart from them; her parents were the ones who suggested she continued to study after finishing school. A few years later once again Barbara's mother suggested she started a course in gravestone restoration, which consisted of 1,800 hours. Her mother thought the course would have certainly given her a very specific qualification crucial to getting her daughter a job. It worked. Barbara got a job with one of the leading firms in the sector thanks to the unusual specialisation she had achieved. It was not long after that though that Barbara realised yet again her new job was not right for her. After only seven days of experience she quit. Those days were enough for her to realise she wanted something else. The job in fact made her feel like she was outsider in society, she had no time to spend with anyone and no one to talk to, she had been deprived of that human element so important to her per-

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sonality, her happiness and her personal fulfilment. After her resignation Barbara took several seasonal/part-time jobs.

It was a low point in Barbara's life; a long period in which she could not overcome the feeling of uncertainty and inadequacy which filled her days. The job she had at that time as a sales assistant had lost its initial charm and she thought she would never be able to find her way in life again. She had nobody to direct her, no one to give her advice or to help her understand more about her needs, her aspirations, her talents. The situation was so bad that her social life started to suffer too. She had no real job where she could identify herself, no real role in society but above all she was feeling a deep sense of discomfort, a lack of personal development.

Finally, the turning point came with the opening of the EU labour market and the sudden presence of new different professional profiles. It was at that time that in the Massa Carrara region, the local government started a new training course consisting of 1,200 hours, of which 400 were work experience. At the end of the course the attendants received the qualification of 'recreation leader'. The course was suggested to her by a friend who had felt Barbara's predisposition towards the subject. She therefore attended the course during the year 2002/2003. During the year Barbara started to express her potentials, which did not go unnoticed. In particular at the end of the course one of her teachers offered Barbara her first job as a professional trainer to help ex cons to be reintegrated in the labour market.

The teacher became Barbara's mentor, a precious reference and a guide for her professional life. Even nowadays she still represents an important person in Barbara's life and a solid point of reference in her professional world. At the end of the course Barbara had realised she wanted to continue studying in order to achieve a higher degree of professionalism in the segment which she finally recognised as hers. She started university yet again, after having been exempted from only two exams as a result of her previous course. She started with the same determination as always, with a strong desire to learn but above all with the certainty this time she knew what she wanted in her life: she wanted to work as a professional trainer. Barbara finished her studies in February 2008. During the university studies once again Barbara's talent was noticed. This time it was Professor Baracani, teacher of Sociology of Work and Deviance who took her under his wing and taught her how to perfectly mix knowledge and practice. In this respect he suggested that she attend the professional course in the sociology of deviance relating to the penitentiary sector. Such experience, he told her, would integrate all the academic knowledge she was getting from the university degree. It worked. As Barbara's CV grew bigger and bigger, more and more people offered her new job opportunities.

It was at the beginning of her journey in Education Science that the professor who had guided her called her to assign her to the pris-

on of Massa. Her role was to find work for prisoners who were about to leave the prison and for those in foster care for adults. At that point she responded that she did not want this role. She had a great fear of putting herself in the presence of the work market but fortunately her teacher would not permit her to miss such an opportunity. He knew, as her guidance counsellor, that Barbara, who by then had graduated, could be a resource in that context. From then on the training agency asked her to officially register as a freelance and began to give her other tasks related to vocational training: tutoring courses for apprentices, for trainees, compulsory education, training, guidance in prison, at the UEPE office for the execution of community sentences, employment centres and study circles. Meanwhile, her path of studies continued successfully and above all the training agency allowed her to attend refresher courses to enable her to qualify in her training field. The courses for the most part took place in the province of Tuscany and Dr Lorieri always participated with motivation and satisfaction. Along with the university she participated in the professional module for 'technical experts in social marginality' and the penitentiary system was the subject of her thesis.

Dr Lorieri trained as a guidance counsellor in the areas of distress, addiction, mental health and immigration, as well as for persons not at risk of social exclusion. It is a background that can be used in all areas of vocational training since the basis for a career path or personal education is solely given by a programme that guides a person to become aware of 'what they want to be when they grow up'. Last year Dr Lorieri also participated in a selection for a training course for trainers in England, she was selected and the two-week programme has been of great educational value.

Currently Dr Lorieri holds various positions in the training sector; she plays the role of tutor in the classroom for courses in compulsory training for a group of teenagers under the age of 18 training in the electricity sector; she has an additional role of guiding people sentenced to community work and former prisoners at the UEPE office with subsequent integration into the working world; and she is the local operator for the 'LAN' Espirit Regional Project whose aim is to create a protocol to set up a formal network of various local public and private entities in order to enable the socially disadvantaged to enter the labour market.

Dr Lorieri achieved all these goals thanks to her knowledge and the English language skills that she had acquired through her studies and degree in Education Science, her ability to act in the face of uncertainty, her curiosity and desire to learn a trade, her openness to colleagues and coordinators collaborating in defining any proposed project, her proactive and creative behaviour in group work and especially thanks to her detailed knowledge of the services provided in the

territory. According to Dr Lorieri what is needed in all local authorities is a fundamental knowledge of the area, a knowledge of which areas are public and private and an understanding of policy mechanisms. Starting with basic knowledge, in time, she herself managed to fit into a network in line with the work requirements that came up at various points along the way, while learning to use the various services in the territory. This was significant in her understanding of the dynamics of bureaucracy, how it works and how to put into practice the formalities that are regularly required.

It was for this very reason that if one asks Dr Lorieri what her advice would be to a young woman who is preparing to enter the world of work, without a doubt she would reply that entry into the world of work is a long process of self-building where every day it is necessary to reflect and rethink the role that you have undertaken. You must have a strong passion, curiosity and the motivation to succeed in order to acquire a capable and effective role. It is essential to be diplomatic and at the same time critical in day-to-day interpersonal relationships and towards the job itself. It is important to be followed by a counsellor to draw up objectives for the short, medium and long term, while trying to identify key skills, desires and personal skills, and it is important to identify the appropriate route to undertake.

It is important to follow your inclinations and plans in a conscious way and to sort what is feasible in practice by degrees. It is important to believe in a project, to make sacrifices in terms of responsibility and commitment, in the knowledge that the job market is full of opportunities and possibilities to discover and constantly evaluate. It is important to be open to movement and change, to continually weigh up your position and ambitiously improve your role, but above all it is important and fundamental to show openness towards what is 'new'.

*The story of Valentina Cioni, aged 30*

*Florence, Italy*

*Degree in Education Science, Masters in Adult Education*

by Giuseppe Troina<sup>14</sup>

Dr Cioni is a classroom tutor, an external consultant for the Trio project in the province of Florence (Tuscany - Italy) and she teaches com-

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puter literacy courses at a training agency. She began by talking about the route that led to her current job. She spoke about how she chose her first university studies and later changed faculty when she became more aware of her orientation. Subsequently she presented her university career and told of her supervisor's special importance on this route, how he became her mentor, and the internship period through the university, stressing the fundamental importance of this internship and her commitment to making the most of the project. Thanks to this she was hired as a permanent external project collaborator, taking part in some of the correlated initiatives. Through family networks and thanks to experience accumulated in the field she was able to find a second job as an information literacy teacher with a training agency. She concluded the interview by stressing that students who enter the working world must give their very best during internships, showing that they are determined and willing, even going beyond assigned schedules and duties. In their university period they should try to create possibilities for internships and training.

*The Story of Barbara Lorieri, aged 40*  
*Massa – Italy*  
*Degree in Education Science*

by Giuseppe Troina

Dr Barbara Lorieri works as a consultant for the rehabilitation of detainees at the prison in Massa (Tuscany - Italy). The interview began with the narration of the route that led her to her present position, and an explanation of the choice of the university route she embarked on: specifically the Faculty of Architecture, Florence. After attending courses for an initial period she decided to abandon this course of studies because she no longer felt it was right for her. She continued by talking about her successive experience on a training course for restorers and her later employment with an important marble restoration company. After a week she left this job because this did not seem to reflect her real aptitudes either. Only after participating in a training course to be a 'recreation leader' did she realise she had found her way and thanks to the support of a course teacher, who became her mentor, she found what is still today her current occupation in the Massa prison for the social rehabilitation of detainees in their post-detention period. In this type of work the interviewee found her orientation and was able to fully express her innate capabilities for social relations, allowing her to overcome a deep crisis she had fallen into due to little trust in her capabilities, which she recovered from thanks to her mentor's support.

The interview placed attention on the importance that networks play in work and on how they helped her in her research. Most of these networks are built during training processes and with work experience, therefore they help you perform your job in the best way possible. Lastly, she wanted to enhance her sense of reward and reacquired personal security, thanks to her regained orientation and her consequent success at work .

## *6. Conclusions*

The stories presented and the route followed to build them can form a paradigm for vocational guidance for students with a degree in social, humanist and educational disciplines. In these sectors, it is easier to find a range of vocational fields that welcome young people who have just finished university, but from another point of view, the resulting professional figure is less clearly outlined and strong.

The professional epistemologies that emerge from the analysed routes point to a mobile knowledge worker, with competences ranging from relationships to organisation and social innovation. However, the project fully asserted that though it may not be necessary, it would be important for there to be an alternative way to get to know the working world, so that young people can be accompanied in the search for their first job. This alternative way would consist of creating a professional relationship which could provide the necessary tools, competences and skills more directly than a degree course or, worse, an ordinary training course.

This type of careers advice would lead to concurrence between critical and reflective studies, an approach to practical experiences, and the ability to build relationships. Precisely the three directions that every educational and formative profession needs to go in.

The stories, in the same way as their publication on a website, are a means to approaching those who have now in some way given up on the printed page. While it is true that we must not be caught unawares by the changing times, it is also true that it takes a long time to make one's way in the world of work. This is why it would be necessary to invest in self-formation and vocational training during school. The stories not only teach us the importance of organising our thoughts, teamwork and decision-making in the sense of entrepreneurialism, but also of tolerance and sharing.

Printed and digital stories can be effective tools to get people to meet and at the same time to perceive the ethical sense that emerges from sharing common goals. We must all exercise unrationed, but very reflective thought in order to ferry our young people towards the gateway of a world that should welcome everyone with no distinction.

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CHAPTER VII  
DIGITAL STORYTELLING  
HOW GRADUATES DESCRIBE THEIR PROCESS  
OF ENTERING THE JOB MARKET

*Valentina Iorio  
Sandra Rueffin  
Regina Egetenmeyer*

*1. Introduction*

Getting graduates involved in writing a digital story about their own experiences when looking for a job can be a quite challenging task. The storyteller has to flash back to the time right after graduation from University, when they were searching for a job and they were planning their future and career. Many graduates would surely have appreciated if someone had been there to help them in their own job finding process. Writing about own experiences can be a way to reflect on what happened and a way to deal with emotions, feelings and states of mind. Sharing own experiences, thoughts, ideas, fears and feeling within a community can be very rewarding experience: many people can profit of personal experiences of others. The readers can look for similar experiences and maybe be able to “find themselves” in the digital stories they have chosen to read. If a person shares with other what his/her experiences are, he/she will realise that there are many people in very similar situations. A digital story can help or be a source of inspiration for others that are also looking for a job or for future graduates. Being in the process of looking for a job can be very frustrating and for this reason, getting support and suggestions from others can help to overcome negative feelings and a sense of loneliness and despair that may arise.

Digital storytelling has the enormous advantage that a significantly larger audience can be reached through posting the story online in web communities. Furthermore, as the web 2.0 technologies allow the interaction between the members of a community, the piece of writing will be accessible for many others and can be commented on and/or discussed. Posting a digital story online represents a way to get a feedback, both from people you know and from other members of the communities. You also have the opportunity to post specific questions. At times it can easier to receive a comment or a suggestion from people you don't know, as it can be that a person feels less judged and observed when sharing experiences with somebody they do not know personally.

One of the most important things when trying to enter the job market is letting as many people as possible know that you are looking for a job. Family, friends, colleagues can only support you if they are aware that you are searching for a job and if they know what you are looking for or you are interested in. Finding useful suggestions and inspirations in the digital story can be another point of reference for a smoother entering into the job market.

Writing down and sharing experiences and thoughts about the own personal searching process is an intimate process. Starting to write can be difficult for many graduates, as they need to overcome the feeling of staring at a white unwritten page. Within the frame of the L@jost project, we have developed a reference guideline to help graduates with writing their own digital story. As storytelling is a very personal way of sharing or describing experience, all the points and the aspects mentioned in the reference guideline are strictly to be taken as suggestions or as a source of inspiration for the own writing process.

When writing a digital story about finding a job, one approach can be to describe in a detailed way the process from searching to signing of your contract. Another way can be writing in a more emotional way and focus more on single aspects of your experiences. Nevertheless, what was important for finding the job should be mentioned. Readers could be interested in how to find vacancies, in what to think about writing a CV, the role of previous work experiences or internships, how to prepare for interviews, factors to consider when deciding where to work and similar information. The most important prerequisite is to be willing to share personal experiences about the job finding process with others.

## *2. Information about the writer of the digital story*

### *2.1 Basic information*

When starting to write a digital story about your own personal process of finding a job, some general information about you as the author can be useful to locate your story within the frame of an online community. Information about the country or the city of residence can also for example be interesting for readers living abroad. Online communities have the enormous advantage of not being built up with boundaries and therefore also readers of foreign countries that might be interested in moving to your country can be interested in reading what the digital story writer wrote about himself or herself. Giving some details about the city of university studies can be very helpful for the same aforementioned reasons. Additionally, also current graduates can be interested in knowing if a company hires candidates with certain qualifications obtained in specific universities. Students might think about their future career reflecting on what and where they are studying. Writing some precise information about the own course of studies and field of special-

isation can be valuable both for current students and for graduates that are looking for an employment. It can help to start and develop strategies to improve the own process of searching for a job.

The city of work can be relevant to find out where potential employers are and can be helpful to identify geographical areas where graduates are most likely to find a job in a particular position or business branch.

### *2.2 What was I looking for?*

Revealing details about what kind of employment you were looking for, meaning a freelance, a part time or a fulltime job can readers help others to find the information they need. Any information about the professional area you as the writer of the digital story is currently working in, gives orientation about what kind of job you do and if the reader is interested in this field of work. It can be also important to mention your goals or personal targets, describing what kind of career or job you aimed at, both in the short and in the long run. Stating your desired salary ranges can give a solid orientation especially to current students that will have to look for a job in the near future. Quantifying what you would like to earn can be a very difficult task because most of the information you find on the internet refer to general job descriptions or are calculate as an average of what people earn in comparable position in a particular field. Additionally, for graduates of social sciences the available online resources are quite limited, as the data that can be found online often refers to other jobs in fields that are not common for such graduates to work in.

A few words on personal expectations, wishes and ideas can help the reader to select the stories he/she is interested in and which reflect his/her own situation best. Naming in a digital story the personal abilities that supported your job finding process would be a support for those who are beginning to look for a vacancy.

### *2.3 What could I offer? What was I good at?*

Spending some time thinking about the own abilities can help to identify strengths, competences but also weaknesses. During the writing of a digital story, things can also be clarified for the author himself or herself: no matter what kind of competences can be identified, specific knowledge (i.e. IT-skills) or for instance soft skills (i.e. the ability to work in a team) can be an asset for successful job finding. Awareness of own competence is therefore crucial for the process of searching for a job and during the job interview.

Generally speaking, internship can represent a way to enter the job market and to be known by future employers. Doing internships is a good way to gather some work experience during the studies and to also find out if the company or the kind of job could be appealing as a long term

occupation. Sharing your experiences and thoughts about your internships can be a source of inspiration for others. Additional work experience rather than internship can also be a positive factor that employers might look for when selecting candidates. Writing also about this aspect can influence or inspire current graduates to look for a job more related to the field of studies also during the course of studies itself.

Other topic you might want to write about is the role of foreign languages in your current position and the role that experiences abroad have been playing both for the job searching process and your current position.

#### *2.4 What strategies were helpful when looking for jobs?*

Job searching strategies include what you as a digital story writer did to find vacancies and where you searched. In this case strategies can refer to formal strategies like searching in newspapers, internet, job platforms, newsletters and/or informal strategies like sending unsolicited applications, using personal contacts and networks. Additionally, future graduates might be interested in knowing what was helpful to know and what was needed to be done to find your current position.

Sharing some experiences concerning the application process itself can support students or graduates that have not been able to find a suitable job yet. The timeframes for job application are usually quite long and the period of time while an applicant has to wait for a reply or an offer from the potential employer can be quite frustrating. Therefore, writing about this demanding time can be useful for other readers. Other information you might want to add refers to the number of applications, interviews and job offers you received. Knowing about how many months after graduation you were able to find a job can be very supportive for those who are still in the process of job finding.

As digital storytelling aims at providing a platform where you can write about your personal experiences, suggestions and ideas, the readers might also appreciate to get some information about how you prepared yourself for the interviews and what kind of data you looked at before meeting your potential employer.

#### *2.5 What was difficult when looking for jobs?*

If you think about reading the job requirements in a vacancy announcement, you usually start thinking about the employer's or the company's expectations. The challenge lies in finding a job and an employer that match with your own profile (see Egetenmeyer 2010). In addition to that, negotiating the contract can also be a tough task for a newly graduate. Therefore, any kind of suggestion or support you might be able to provide about this issue can surely be of help for a person that is still looking for a job. Other factors that might have influenced your personal job selection

like the city, the contract type or the working hours are also important to be mentioned if they have been also relevant for your own decision.

### *2.6 Personal feelings, family and friends*

Personal feelings about the process of job finding can belong to a very wide and differentiated range of emotions. Your state of mind can vary between the feeling of being successful and reaching your personal targets and struggles, isolation, from the feeling of being rejected until the feeling of failure. Writing about these emotions in a story can be very helpful and encouraging for those who are still searching for a job. One issue you could also deal with is the parents' expectations. These expectations can become a problem if they turn into pressure and give the feeling of not being going enough and not able to satisfy what people around you expect.

Besides, in your story you can write about external support provided by university, employment agencies or given by your family and friends and share any strategy you might have adopted to overcome problems and negative emotions.

### *2.7 Recommendations for students and newly graduates*

Any kind of recommendations or further advice you can give to students and newly graduates is a help for them while they are going through the process of job searching. Writing about what was important for you during that time can be a source of inspiration for others. Sharing your story within a community interested in the same topic is a way of providing targeted support and information. All your personal experiences are very valuable and it is up to you to decide what can be added to your story.

## *3. Process of searching for a job<sup>1</sup>*

Within the frame of the EU-project L@jost, a transnational analysis about the job searching of graduates of social sciences in six European countries has been carried out. The project partners in Germany, Romania, Denmark, Italy, Spain and France have written a national report about their countries using the data collected July until September 2010 through a semi-structured survey. All the gathered data has been categorised and a transnational analysis has been produced<sup>2</sup>. The following

<sup>1</sup> The following text was extracted from the Transnational Analysis. Cf. Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students' Needs for Job Finding and Employers' Expectations. A Transnational Analysis with a Focus on Graduates in Psychology, Sociology and Educational Sciences*. Essen, University of Duisburg-Essen, 2009, (Unpublished project report).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ibidem.

paragraphs have been taken from the transnational analysis and shall be a source of information for students and newly graduates involved in the process of looking for a suitable position.

There are heterogeneous processes for the time that stretches from the job searching until the signing of a contract. Graduates were asked to stress from their perspective important aspects for finding a job: what did they do to find vacancies? What was helpful for them to know? What did they need to do to find the current job? How do they estimate the role of networks in this whole process?

### 3.1 Germany

Within the answers of the German graduates that have been interviewed by the German partner, the following overall process can be identified: at the beginning of each job finding process the graduates have identified open positions. They considered it as helpful to create an account on a business network like “Xing”. The graduates pointed out, that they ‘prepared their CV’s very carefully and worked hard on their applications e.g. by looking for good sentences for the covering letter’<sup>3</sup>. Some went through many job interviews, ‘with a feeling that the offered position would not fit anyway’<sup>4</sup>. After a successful job interview, the process often fastens up and the graduates could start working immediately.

Several aspects in the process of finding a job were mentioned as important: the graduates pointed out that it is very important to find out what the market wants, to know which positions it makes sense to send applications to. In this context, it is absolutely necessary to understand the language of job advertisements. Furthermore, students need to know the right sources to find vacancies. Therefore, they mentioned that the ‘search in specialized search engines is important, to know which internet job markets exist and how to use them’<sup>5</sup>. The knowledge of the required work contents and methods used within the vacancies were named, too. It was also mentioned that you have ‘to keep eyes continuously open for positions and to have an overview about the current job market’<sup>6</sup>. Most helpful is to be perseverant and to be patient. Therefore, networking was emphasized as important resource.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Germany-UDE, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Germany-FIM, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Germany-UDE, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Germany-FIM, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

The estimation about the role of networks given by the asked graduate students is not directly clear. Some of them considered networks as not important and others considered them as very important. Having a closer look at the abilities that supported the job finding process, it is very clear that networking has a huge role for all interviewed graduates in the whole process of finding a job.

Internships are valued as highly important. The time spent doing internships has been described as ‘a practical time where work quality was tested’<sup>7</sup>. Beside internships, the graduates consider work experiences in the professional field of their studies as helpful.

In connection with the application process they stated that a person needs to know ‘how to create an online CV, how to apply and how an application package has to look like’<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, graduates mentioned that it is helpful to practice the interview situation. Another very important aspect named by most of the graduates is to be good at self-marketing and self-presentation which means basically to be aware of own experiences, skills and personality. The internet has been mentioned by some graduates as best way to find vacancies. There you have a variety of possibilities e.g. websites, newsletters, newsgroups, automatically send applications and business network profiles. But also newspapers and job agencies are used. To ask the academic staff to forward job offers, to visit job affairs and to get in touch with companies and institutions have been identified as other good ways. The German employed graduates send unsolicited applications as well as applications to explicit vacancies. They considered personal competencies, self-organisation and flexibility as helpful competencies within the job finding process. One graduate assesses the process of writing her diploma thesis a demonstration of her responsible and independent way of working: ‘the ability to write demonstrative and substantiated text for the diploma thesis showed suitable to work independently as a researcher’<sup>9</sup>.

### 3.2 Romania

Within the answers of the Romanian graduates, the following overall process can be identified: vacancies are found in the internet on specialised websites and in the Official Monitor Magazine. Romanian graduates described that they were sending only application to explicit vacancies. Some graduates also mentioned that they send unsolicited applications. They carried out the searching for vacancies on specialised websites be-

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Germany-UDE, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

cause they were ‘searching for jobs especially in the field of higher education’<sup>10</sup>. One person mentioned that she was informed about the vacancies of her current employment by a class mate. The asked graduates pointed out that it was helpful to talk with the academic staff from the university to ‘get their input and pieces of advice’<sup>11</sup>. Another helpful aspect was to talk to people who work in a similar position. These aspects could be summarized under the term networking.

The interviewed Romanian graduates mentioned the ability to speak English, good computer skills and a good knowledge in the field as supportive competences to find a job. They also stressed that it is important to have little luck. The asked graduates mentioned that their families and friends as important resource in the whole process; some graduates also named academic staff.

### 3.3 Denmark

An employed Danish graduate found a job because the employer he applied to recommended an application for a different vacant position. So he stressed, that networking plays a big role. On the one hand getting to know new people in informal situations (e.g. outside the own employment situation like a party) seems to be important. On the other hand networking ‘within the organisation’<sup>12</sup> is mentioned as strategy to receive another temporary position or even turning it into a permanent position after starting a first employment in an organisation. In the context of temporary positions, it was stated that showing good effort while being in a temporary position and giving input to new projects might be a crucial factor in advancing the own career, especially in ‘research driven institutions’<sup>13</sup>.

Concerning the preparation of their application, the graduates pointed out in the workshop interviews that writing a precise and concise application having limited amount of space is very difficult. In the DPU Survey it was shown that many graduates found it important to take two ways of applying: referring to explicit job announcements, as well as sending unsolicited applications. Taking some time to find out what the job advertisement is demanding was stated as necessary. Concerning their motivation graduates felt that it could be hard to maintain motivation especially when there are many other applicants for one job or when they did not get the chance to present themselves in a job interview. This may lead to doubt of oneself and of ‘own abilities’<sup>14</sup>. For that

<sup>10</sup> Romania, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>12</sup> Denmark, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem.



reason the participants in the DPU Survey considered the encouragement by friends or fellow students important when applying for a certain job. The DPU Survey figured out that the majority of graduates found a workplace within one year after their graduation.

### 3.4 Italy

The employed graduated students from Italy found the vacancies of their jobs by contacting the local employment centres, by searching in the internet and by looking into newspapers. It was pointed out that, within the whole job finding process, it is important to know ‘the territories’ needs, to have gained work experiences in the field of the job and be good in negotiation<sup>15</sup>. They described the role of networks as ‘fundamental especially in the first step of the job searching process’<sup>16</sup>.

### 3.5 Spain

The way mentioned by the Spanish employed graduate for finding vacancies was through the internet and newspapers. It was described that it needs a long time period of searching in different sources. Subscribing to a job offer service was a way to find a job that has been described by the Spanish employed graduate. After that an invitation followed for an interview. A week later the contract was signed. A good application package was stated as a good strategy in the job finding process. Networks are considered as a ‘useful source to look for a job’<sup>17</sup>.

### 3.6 France

Most of the employed graduated students from France find vacancies through the internet on special websites. Another way was to go to the website of organisations and to look for job offers. Some did ‘a contest’<sup>18</sup> to get a job in public service. Once you pass it you can start working immediately. An internship was one way described by the French employees to get a job. After the internship was done the employer told the intern about a vacant position.

The French graduates send applications to explicit vacancies as well as unsolicited ones. The employees stated that you should ‘not hesitate to contact companies directly by mail, but also by phone’<sup>19</sup>. They recommended

<sup>15</sup> Italy, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Spanish, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>18</sup> France, National Report, in Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students’ Needs for Job Finding and Employers’ Expectations...*, cit.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

getting to know the position to apply on very well. It was considered as very helpful to be aware 'of your own values, the market demand and the different business sectors that recruit and that can offer a suitable job'<sup>20</sup>. None of the French graduates stated that network represent an explicitly advantage.

### 3.7 Summary and comparison

The answers of the employed graduates of the different countries shows clearly that networking played an important role to find a job in most countries. However, networks were mentioned in several ways. The German, the Italian as well as the Spanish graduates mentioned networks as important to get to know about vacancies. On the other hand, Romanian graduates mentioned networks primarily to get advice within their process to find a job. The Danish graduates mentioned networks in different fields as important to get a temporary or permanent job contract. Thereby the university staff was described by the graduates in different roles within their job finding process: the German students are informed about vacancies from the academic staff. In Romania students see the academic staff as advisors within the job finding process.

The internet is considered by all asked graduates as important resource to find a job. For all of them, job searching engines were mentioned as important tools. However they use the internet also in different ways: the German and Danish graduates mentioned the use of business networks like "Xing" to post their application. The Romanian and French graduates mentioned specialized websites where they find job advertisements for the special field of higher education or other positions. But also newspapers and specialized magazines where described as important resource. The Italian graduates mentioned also job centres as resource to find vacancies.

Concerning their competencies, the German, the Italian and the French graduates stressed the importance of self-marketing competencies as well as knowledge about the labour market and the application process as central competencies for finding a job.

The Danish as well as the Romanian graduates mentioned the importance of the support given by their families and friends. This could be interpreted as emotional resource for the job finding process.

## 4. Application process<sup>21</sup>

Within the frame of the transnational analysis, the timeframe from sending the applications until getting a job offer has been referred to as application process. The graduates were asked about the duration of their

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> The following chapter has been extracted from the Transnational Analysis. Egetenmeyer R., Iorio V., Rueffin S., *Identification of Students' Needs for Job Finding and Employers' Expectations...*, cit.

own application process, their experiences about the number of applications, interviews as well as job offers.

#### *4.1 Germany*

The German graduates mentioned that the timeframe from sending the applications to getting the job can last between three and twelve months. Within this time they sent between one and sixty applications and have had between two and ten interviews. Out of this amount, they got between one and five job offers.

#### *4.2 Romania*

The Romanian graduate students sent five to thirty applications within a timeframe of three till five months. They received two to three job offers.

#### *4.3. Denmark*

Although the graduates, who were asked in the workshop interviews, prepared themselves for their job interview, many found themselves in unexpected situations and were asked questions they did not expect. For example there was an unexpected high number of other applicants, or the graduates were asked about either their subjective strengths or qualities respectively their weaknesses. Gathering some information about the organisation in order to prepare for a job interview was mentioned as additional strategy. Another aspect that has been pointed out was the way an application was delivered: a brief application letter without recommendation letters was described as the more promising way to apply for a job. There was also the situation in which applicants had to choose from different job offers, so that they had to make considerations, for example about the organisation and its location, possible work tasks and payment. Furthermore, there was a case in which the applicant and the board of directors had different perspectives about how the certain job was executed within the organisation. One result of the DPU Survey was that applications are done in many ways. On the one hand the graduates respond to job announcements, or send unsolicited applications. Moreover, they used networks at the unemployment insurance funds as well as personal networks. The DPU Survey also provides information about when the graduates find a job. Some students already found their job while still studying; others entered into the job within one year after graduation. In the medium term of one year after entering their first job, the majority of participants of the DPU Survey found a new job, while others proceeded in the same job or were jobless.

#### *4.4 Italy*

The National Report from Italy did not provide analysable data on the question of this paragraph.

#### 4.5 Spain

The Spanish graduate sent 10 applications and was invited to seven interviews. Three months after graduation, the graduate got a work contract.

#### 4.6 France

Some French graduates described the whole application process as very frustrating because it took very long. It has happened that they merely got a temporary contract for only one year. On the other hand there was also the situation that two applications were sent and two invitations for an interview followed. They said that the offers are rare but once you apply, you have a very good chance to get an interview invitation.

#### 4.7 Summary and comparison

The data shows that in Germany as well as in Romania the application process lasts at least three months. Also the Spanish graduate mentions three months. While the German graduates mention an amount up to 60 applications, Romanian students mention up to 30 applications, the Spanish graduate mentions 10 applications. That could be an indication of the differences concerning the size of employment markets and the employment possibilities in the different countries. So the employment market for graduates in educational science, sociology and psychology is maybe bigger in Germany than in Romania or in Spain.

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## CONCLUSIONS

*Laura Malita*

The 21st century society is (more or less, if we think at certain areas of the globe) a technological-based society. The everyday life activities are strongly related to the technological part, the new media tools and applications, the most recent ones known being Web 2.0 tools and applications.

In this technological-based society, the users' roles have changed and people start to become more actively engaged in the online activities. On the one hand, just like before, they are able to read the digital content available online, to reflect upon it and to think critically. On the other hand, thanks to the accessibility of the Web 2.0 social media applications, the users have now a far more important role: to produce and distribute information. By uploading digital content, by sharing it, by commenting on different social media sites, they become producers of information in a way that was not possible before. Thus, with great ease, they now have a new role, the role of the “prosumer” of the information, a combination of the words “consumer” and “producer”.

Consequently, more and more user-generated content is now available and thus, a continuous improvement of the necessary skills and competences is required in order to search, to find, to access, to reflect and to rethink it. Therefore, even the concept of digital literacy has changed and it has numerous variations, such as ICT literacy, technological literacy, media literacy, visual literacy and also global literacy.

Moreover, due to the global economic crisis, more and more people are now in the position of having to search for a job. Thus, more than before, they need to use any piece of information, news, person or technology in order to find an opportunity to enter properly on the labor market.

Among the people who are in the unpleasant situation of having to search for a job, students and young people are one of the most disadvantaged categories. Therefore, they must to be more creative and innovative so that they find solutions to stand out in order to captivate the attention of employers and recruitment agencies.

As they are considered a technological and digital equipped generation, the so called “digital natives”, they can combine business with pleas-

ure for a better employability, taking also into consideration the fact that employers and recruitment agencies began to pay increasing attention to the online labour market.

As it is well-known for thousands of years, people love telling stories and they also learn from the stories they hear. Thus, throughout history, storytelling was one of the most important ways of transmitting information, knowledge and values. By combining storytelling with the digital and technological abilities and functionalities, a new concept has emerged: the digital storytelling.

Taking the above issues into consideration, the authors of the present book tried to offer possible solutions in order to increase the employability through digital storytelling, especially for students who are going to graduate, for young people and students who have recently graduated and are still in the unpleasant situation of having to search for a job.

At the beginning of the book, the readers will be introduced to the concept of the digital storytelling: they will find what digital storytelling is, how this concept emerged throughout history and why is it important nowadays, along with its different purposes and uses.

Therefore, the readers will have a short overview of the main issues regarding the digital storytelling. They will find definitions of the storytelling, tips on how to build a story (starting from how to choose a subject, how to create the narrative part, how to choose and to combine the narrative part with the digital content in order to add an interesting view to the story/content, how to reflect on the digital story, to refine it, to share it and to interact with the audience etc.), arguments related to the importance of digital storytelling and also which are the connections with the learning process: which kind of skills and competencies a digital storyteller will enhance or develop (narrating and writing for an audience, communicational skills – receiving and responding to the feedbacks, expressing opinions), reflecting & thinking critically, also improving their language and computer skills by using software that combines a variety of multimedia: text, images, audio, video and web publishing.

In the second chapter of the book, the readers will have a more detailed image of the digital storytelling process. Therefore, at the beginning of this chapter, the readers will find some fundamental issues regarding the development of each digital story and some questions will be answered for them: who am I in the whole process of the story (what is the storyteller's role), why am I here (the purpose of the story), what is the story's proper vision, and what is the message the author wants to transmit to the audience.

After clarifying these important aspects, another very important issue is related to the topic chosen for the story, in order to captivate the attention of the users. Related to this, paying attention to the definition of the global aims of the story, to the insertion of the narrator point of

view, to the addition of some key questions, to the choice of the contents, to the clarity of the reading, to the rhythm of the narration, to the insertion of the suitable soundtrack, images, videos or other multimedia resources, to the language and grammar correction are important features which the digital storytellers must not omit.

Moreover, through this chapter, the readers will be introduced to the assessment of the digital storytelling script, according to Guber's vision. The test consists of five questions the authors have to respond to: do they have an authentic story, does the story engage the addressees, is the story adapted to the situation, is there a link with the top idea and is it adapted to the location. After this, they will find some considerations regarding the incorporation of the digital elements, so to add value to the story. Likewise, another aspect which will add value to the story is related to the compulsory insertion of the emotional components. Moreover, the digital storyteller must be enthusiastic, but not forget to add realism and credibility to the narration. They must observe and know the audience/the listeners, as it is important how a story is related in order to attract the audience and then to be able to interact with them, to observe their reaction and to listen to their opinion, to know how to receive feedback and to express related opinions. All of these aspects are important in order to clarify some issues, to add value to the story and also to improve the story if it is necessary.

In the next chapter, after the readers are familiar with the digital story process, they will be introduced to the tools which can be used in order to create a digital story. Thus, they will find about few tools which can be used for digital storytelling, which are grouped into the following categories: audio & video, slideshow, photo, text, mix or mobile tools, each category having minimum 3-4 examples. The readers will have the possibility to find the main characteristics for each of them. By doing this, they will decide later which of them to use when they will start to create a digital story.

In the following chapter, the readers will be introduced through the digital skills necessary in order to be an active citizen of the 21st century. They will see through the eyes of the main worldwide organizations how important are those skills and how literacy has emerged. Likewise, they readers will see how the digital storytelling is intertwined with this plethora of skills & (informal) learning and thus, how the digital storytellers could develop or enhance through the usage of the digital storytelling. Moreover, they will also read about the digital storytelling as a way to become producers (and what they could learn from this), and why digital storytelling is important for the educational area: for distance learning, online learning or blended one. Consequently, by completing the Gruber test, the readers will have the possibility to find about the complex process of digital storytelling assessment.

Throughout the next chapter, the readers will see digital storytelling as a job learning process. Thus, they will be introduced through some examples used in the EC Lifelong Learning, Transversal Ka3 project named “Learn about finding jobs through digital storytelling” (L@jost). At the beginning of this section, they can learn about the use of digital storytelling for job-searching purposes as Kathy Hansen presents in her blog. In addition, good advices can be also found by exploring the “icould” platform and by reading about some tips and pieces of advice offered by 10 of the top FORTUNE 500 Recruiters. Then, the readers would be introduced to the ePortfolios developed as digital stories and used in the job searching process, through a L@jost connection, as well. In the next section, the readers will learn about the importance of networking in the digital storytelling process and how the networking is important for creating and the online reputation.

In the succeeding chapter, the readers will have the possibility of understanding the importance of the storytelling for students who are going to graduate. They can also find advices from device counseling services, from assessment services, from career advisors and even from their teachers. The importance of communication is presented during a job finding process, because communicating, storytelling and remembering are anyhow part of the human needs that are intertwined with job search procedures. Moreover, during this chapter some fresh digital stories examples are presented as they are collected (they are also available on the L@jost project website) and narrated by their authors in order to learn in an alternative way about the working world and about how digital storytelling could be also used during the job finding process.

The last chapter is also important for the people who are in the position of finding a job because they will benefit directly from an analysis developed during the L@jost project. On the one hand they will have an overview from the ex-students who were in the same position like they were last years, but fortunately, they found a proper job. Thus, the students will have the opportunity to see and to learn important issues related to the process of finding a job, from peers and from different European countries which are involved in this partnership. On the other hand, they will also have the opportunity to see the employers’ expectations, which are also extremely important for them, because in this way they will know directly from the “source” what they are looking for and what are their expectations. Both employers and employed are from different countries and thus the whole landscape is more important because probably there are students who intend to look for a job in other countries, too.

Taking into account the above presented chapters, a reader could now understand the whole landscape of digital storytelling, which is an extremely complex one. The purpose of this book was not to present in



detail all the aspects regarding the digital storytelling (there are plenty of books which could be consulted for this purposes), but to try to offer another perspective of digital storytelling usage: to find a job and thus to increase the employability, especially for students who are going to graduate. Therefore, although the study is not exhaustive, we still hope that the information presented here will help people who are looking for a job to better understand that using different methods in different ways, will give them more chances to find a job according to their qualifications and expectations.



## GLOSSARY

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>Assessment</i>              | The digital storytelling assessment is a complex process, that follows: the storytelling approach (subject, telling the story, expanding the story, processing and reconstructing the story), the level of reflection and also the use of multimedia in reflective learning.     |
| <i>Communication</i>           | Act by which one person gives to or receives information which seems easy but part of that complexity is the fact that we do not understand or respond equally to the each message. It is important to work it in deep in storytelling to assure full understanding by receiver. |
| <i>Digital literacy</i>        | The ability to communicate, discuss issues, gather information and be able to seek help in a digital world.  |
| <i>Digital storytelling</i>    | The practice of combining narrative (storytelling) with digital content, including images, sound and video. It is a medium of expression, communication, integration, and imagination.   |
| <i>Employer</i>                | Legal entity (person or institution) which has the right to hire or fire people, which offers a job under a contract of employment that establish rights and obligations for both parts.   |
| <i>Employers' needs</i>        | All the skills, abilities and competences an employer identifies and considers when defining the employee's ideal profile for a vacant position. The employer will select new staff according to this ideal profile.   |
| <i>Employers' expectations</i> | All the skills, abilities and competences that an employer looks for when recruiting new employees and selecting new staff.  |

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>ePortfolio</i>              | ePortfolio is usually online based portfolio combining all the benefits of multimedia and Internet. An ePortfolio, also known as an e-portfolio, electronic or digital portfolio, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually in an online environment.   |
| <i>Formation</i>               | The term is used to indicate the process implemented by the subject to achieve a particular, own personal form. The form is external and internal. The formation process takes place by learning know-how and acquiring knowledge, but above all through the inner awareness that the subject acquires through said know-how and knowledge. |
| <i>Graduates' expectations</i> | Personal wishes towards the potential or the new employer. Expectations mainly refer to the position or the role a person has or will have in a company or an institution, e. g. tasks and responsibilities. Expectations can refer also to city of work, the contract type or the working hours.   |
| <i>Graduates' needs</i>        | The kind of job or position a graduate would like to have when he or she starts working. Graduates' needs can also refer to the salary, the duration of the working contract and the city of work.  |
| <i>Narrative</i>               | The term indicates telling a story that takes place in a unit of time, space and place following a logical development. It is used in scientific terminology to speak of storytelling.  |
| <i>Networking</i>              | The exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions. Networking means also the cultivation of productive relationships and in this book the sharing of the digital stories is included into the networking concept.  |
| <i>Online reputation</i>       | All digital content created and associated with a user represent his/her online identity and reputation and are very important to be scanned before to start to find a job.   |
| <i>Plot</i>                    | Sequence of events that take place in the storytelling.   |
| <i>Prosumer</i>                | Due to the Web 2.0 tools and applications, the users could have now two roles, one traditional related to the digital content consuming and the other one of producer of the digital content, by commenting, tagging, uploading and creating digital content etc. Thus, the users had become prosumers.                                     |

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Recruitment agency</i>             | Institution which acts as an intermediate agent between employer (public or private institution) and employee. This will present to the employer the person who match with the job description; the employee has the opportunity to choose between more job offers. |
| <i>Script</i>                         | Written version of a story which is used in preparing the storytelling.   |
| <i>Self</i>                           | The self is regarded as a unique characteristic of human beings making self-perception and discrimination between the own person and its social environment possible. It is a basic requirement for identity development and self-presentation.                     |
| <i>Story process</i>                  | Way in which a story is defined, worked and presented to transmit defined aim or piece of story to a wider audience.  |
| <i>Storytelling</i>                   | The term indicates telling a fact or a story or an action performed by the subject in a unit of time, space and place.  |
| <i>Tale</i>                           | The term indicates telling popular or cultured stories. They can be fables or fairytales or tales about animals or myths that have become stories in the various cultures in the world.   |
| <i>Tools for digital storytelling</i> | Instruments or Web 2.0 applications which can be used for digital storytelling. These can be used online or offline and offer the possibility to tell your story in a more interesting way, using photos, videos, text and animations.                              |



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