

The Use of Digital Storytelling in the Education of Social Studies Teacher Candidates

Sule EGUZ
Inonu University

Abstract: The aim of this study is to determine the topics and reasons that social studies teacher candidates prefer after receiving digital story creation, use and evaluation training; to reveal their plans to integrate digital stories into social studies lessons in their future professional lives. The research is designed as a case study, which is one of the qualitative research methods. This study was carried out with 26 teacher candidates attending the Education Faculty Social Studies Teaching Program of a state university in Eastern Anatolia. Participants of this study, which is conducted with 1st grade students, have not received any training on the creation, use or evaluation of digital stories and have not prepared a digital story. Within the scope of the research, training was provided for 4 weeks on the characteristics of digital stories and their integration into social information. After the training, a semi-structured interview form was developed and used to determine the topics they preferred in the secondary school social studies curriculum and their reasons, and to determine their plans for using digital stories in their future professional lives. At the end of the research, it was determined that the most preferred subjects were in the field of active citizenship and global connections learning and that they displayed a positive approach to using digital stories effectively in their future professional lives.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, Social studies, Education, Teacher candidates

Introduction

Today, digital applications are used in all areas of life, and digital technology draws a rising graphic. The prediction that digital technologies will develop further in the future and continue to exist in our lives is important in terms of the diversification of usage areas in education. At this point, teaching methods and modern teaching materials gain importance. In this context, digital stories are good examples that can be given to teaching materials in the teaching of many subject areas.

Digital stories can be expressed as informative, instructional, motivational, demonstrative, and narrative of personal experiences, whether real or fictional, depending on the integrity of the subject (Robin, 2009). Digital story making, as a social pedagogy, creates a safe and competent space for learning through intercultural collaboration. Digital story creation enhances students' creativity and empowers students intellectually and culturally (Benmayor, 2008). As a matter of fact, it is necessary to evaluate the stories in social studies education as we evaluate them wherever humanity exists. The aim of this study is to determine the preferred topics and reasons for social studies teacher candidates after receiving digital story creation, use and evaluation training; to reveal their plans to integrate digital stories into social studies lessons in their future professional lives. In line with this general purpose, the following questions were sought:

- What are the topics and preference reasons for social studies teacher candidates in the digital story creation process?
- What are the contributions of the education provided to teacher candidates?
- What are the social studies teacher candidates' plans to integrate digital stories into their lessons in their future professional lives?

Method

Qualitative research methodology was used in the research and in this context, descriptive case study model, one of the qualitative research designs, was used. In this descriptive model, it is aimed to make the unknown situations clearer (Davey, 1991).

Study Group

This study was carried out with a total of 26 teacher candidates, 15 of whom were male (58%) and 11 (42%) female, who attended the Education Faculty Social Studies teaching program of a state university in Eastern Anatolia. In determining the participants, criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. The criterion for this study is that the participants are social studies teacher candidates and have not had any experience with digital stories. In the framework of research ethics, the names of the participating teacher candidates were not used directly in the study. For this reason, nicknames ranging from S1 ... S26 were used for the participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants of this study, which was carried out with the first-grade students of social studies teaching, had not received any training on the creation, use or evaluation of digital stories and did not prepare a digital story. Within the scope of the research, training was provided for 3 weeks on the features of digital stories and their integration into social studies. After the training, a semi-structured interview form was developed and used to determine the topics they preferred in the secondary school Social Studies Curriculum and their reasons, and to determine their plans for using digital stories in their future professional lives. Relevant literature was used to ensure the content validity of the prepared form. Afterwards, they were asked to check the questions in the developed form by submitting to the expert opinion that they are clear, understandable, cover the subject area and the purpose of the research. Form 2 was submitted to the opinion of the field expert and necessary corrections were made and it was made ready for application. The data of the research were analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique. In this analysis, the data can be organized according to the themes revealed by the research questions, or it can be presented by considering the questions or dimensions used in the interview and observation processes (Wolcott, 1994). The data obtained in accordance with the nature of the descriptive analysis were summarized according to previously determined themes and interpreted by the researcher.

Findings

The findings of the study were examined under the titles of “the subjects preferred by the participants and the reasons for their preference”, “the contribution of the training given to the teacher candidates” and “the plans of the participants to integrate digital stories into the lessons”.

Participants' Preferred Topics and Reasons for Preference

Participants were tasked with choosing a topic from the Social Studies Curriculum and planning a digital story on this topic. The topics preferred by the participants within this task are listed in Table 1. When Table 1 was examined, it was seen that the participants mostly concentrated on the 7th grade subjects, and they chose the subjects in the 5th and 6th grade curriculum. “The Effects of Natural Disasters on Our Lives” and “Children's Rights” in the 5th grade, “Democracy Everywhere” in the 6th grade, and “I Produce Solutions to Global Problems” in the 7th grade were the subjects most preferred by the pre-service teachers in the digital story planning task. It was observed that 3 factors played an important role in the participants' reasons for their subject selection: The fact that it is easier to convey visually, the concretization of abstract concepts, and that it has a content that allows them to develop critical perspectives were suggested by the participants as the most effective reasons for choosing the topic. Some of the participants' views are given below.

Some of the issues are very complex. I think it provides great convenience especially in visualizing the events related to the Ottoman Empire. (S5)

It will work in concretizing abstract concepts such as democracy, rights, and freedom. (S13)

Some issues are perceived as closed to criticism. However, with a good story, the meaning can be deepened, and students can be given a critical perspective. (S25)

Table 1. Participants' preferred topics

Topics	Participants	Frequency(<i>f</i>)
Grade 5 Subjects		
The Effects of Natural Disasters on Our Lives	S3, S7, S25	3
Effects of Climate on Human Activities	S20	1
Children's Rights	S1, S24, S26	3
Our Cultural Wealth	S17	1
Tourism and International Relations	S4	1
Total		9
Grade 6 Subjects		
Change in Science and Technology	S10	1
I Consciously Choose My Profession	S8	1
Democracy Everywhere	S13, S21	2
Turkish Women from Yesterday to Today	S6	1
Popular Culture and Us	S16	1
Total		6
Grade 7 Subjects		
Freedom of Communication	S12, S19	2
From Principality to World State	S9	1
Where Should We Settle	S18	1
Your Future is in Your Hands	S5	1
From Clay Tablets to Smart Tablets	S15	1
I Produce Solutions to Global Problems	S2, S11, S14, S22, S23	5
Total		11

Contribution of the Given Education to Teacher Candidates

Within the scope of the research, the question of what the education given to them contributed to you was asked to reveal the contributions of education regarding the features of digital stories and their integration into social studies lessons. Participants in their answers; they stated that they contributed to the use of digital tools, such as gaining different perspectives, developing imagination, making it easy to convey thoughts, understanding that technology is a useful tool when used in the right way, and learning to use digital tools in literary context in social studies. The students expressed some of these thoughts as follows:

The education we received expanded the limits of my imagination. When I saw the curriculum and subjects, many fictions came to my mind. (S7)

I have seen that the use of different tools in teaching can be beneficial and draw attention. (S19)

I can express my thoughts more clearly. (21)

Future Plans of Participants to Integrate Digital Stories into Lessons

Under this heading, students were asked about their plans to benefit from digital stories in their future professional teaching lives. When the answers given were examined, most of the students (68%) stated positive opinions that they could apply them in social studies lessons even if not in every subject, since the editing takes a lot of time. Other students (32%) stated that they would not be able to use the curriculum, especially in the first years of their teaching life, due to their concerns about not being able to develop the curriculum, difficulties in creating content, and having knowledge that can be put into practice in the first years. Some of the thoughts of some of the students who gave their opinions are as follows:

I intend to use it within the bounds of possibility. (S2)

I can already think of a lot of fiction. I want to apply all of them in my teaching life. (S11)

When we examined the program and the subjects, many ideas emerged in my mind. I also think that the lessons I will teach with digital stories can be interesting for students. I use it for this reason. (S18)

The first years I am appointed are a little difficult. When I am an experienced teacher, I can apply it easier and better. (S20)

Actually, it takes a little time. I am hesitant to apply it. (S23)

Results and Discussion

The aim of the study is to determine the topics and reasons that social studies teacher candidates prefer after receiving digital story creation, use and evaluation training; to reveal their plans to integrate digital stories into social studies lessons in their future professional lives.

In the study, it was observed that the participants mostly concentrated on the 7th grade subjects, and they chose topics in the 5th and 6th grade curriculum. “The Effects of Natural Disasters on Our Lives” and “Children's Rights” in the 5th grade, “Democracy Everywhere” in the 6th grade, and “I Produce Solutions to Global Problems” in the 7th grade were the subjects most preferred by the pre-service teachers in the digital story planning task. It was observed that 3 factors played an important role in the participants' reasons for their subject selection. These are to be able to convey visually more easily, to concretize abstract concepts and to have content that allows them to develop critical perspectives.

The contributions of education regarding the features of digital stories and their integration with social studies, to reach the use of digital tools by the participants, to gain different perspectives, to develop their imagination, to convey thoughts, to understand that technology is a useful tool when used in the right way, and digital tools in social studies in a literary context it is listed as providing learning to use. Most of the participants (68%) stated positive opinions that they can apply in social studies lessons even if not in every subject, since it takes a lot of time to edit in their future professional lives. In the studies of Omar, Ozudogru and Cırak Nese (2018), it was observed that pre-service teachers were willing to use digital stories in their future careers, in line with the results of the research. Other students (32%) stated that they would not be able to use the curriculum, especially in the first years of their teaching life, due to their concerns about not being able to develop the curriculum, difficulties in creating content, and having knowledge that can be put into practice in the first years. In summary, it was determined at the end of the study that the most preferred subjects were in the field of learning effective citizenship and global connections, the education provided contributed to the teacher candidates and they displayed a positive approach to using digital stories effectively in their future professional lives.

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Author Information

Şule Egüz

Inonu University
Inonu University, Education Faculty, Department of Social Studies
Education, Turkey
Contact e-mail: suleeguz@gmail.com
