

Animation and storytelling for trainer and teacher

External good practice
by EURO-NET, Italy

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Comparative Research
Network e.V.

Animation, storytelling and learning - a mission impossible?

When assessing literature on pedagogics storytelling or its modern form, the digital storytelling are accepted standards. The techniques are used in classrooms for literature, language, art but as well for critical analysis in sociology, politics or geography. The teacher work with it oral, text and photo based or with film. Storytelling is helping to develop analytical, language, expressional and presentation skills. It foster creativity and self-confidence.

Animation, the art of bringing graphics either digital or with stop motion to live, had been long neglected, having trainer and teacher who are uncertain how to work with the tools.

Euro-Net, a NGO from Potenza, Italy is working on this gap. During the Erasmus Plus project applied emotion, they offered for the first time an English staff training on storytelling and animation for helping

professions. The course was attended by 24 counselors, trainer, teacher and therapist, dealing with burn out in helping profession. The participants came from Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary, ranking from 22 to 67 and with various backgrounds and experiences on storytelling or animation.

What is done?

The training started with an introduction to the theory of storytelling. Beside the basics of how to tell a good story, exercises on storyboarding followed. The group splitter in sub-teams of four, which had to develop their own story, based on their everyday experience. In the storyboard the character and the environment had to be developed. At the end of the first day every team had an outlined story - a clown in a hospital feeling challenged, a girl full of doubts struggling on her way or a fabula of a snail and a grass-horse overcoming obstacles together.

After the stories had been outlined two days of working on the animation followed. During the first day the trainer got familiar with the programs and created in small exercises graphics and logos. On the second day the characters of the story came to life and the backgrounds had been created. During the process of creating the animation, as well the team building started. The teams worked self-coordinated with permanent mentoring through the course leaders. The group dynamics developed a learning process, where creativity, ICT skills and methodological knowledge where collaborative developed by the team, enameling everyone to bring in its own talents. More introvert trainers worked and explained the software and animated the graphics designed by the more artistic

skilled. Another pair worked on the soundtrack and the atmosphere of the film. In this way all participants experienced teaching and learning at the same time. It helped to connect the cultures, backgrounds, experiences and generations.

Andrea, trainer at Euro-Net says, that connecting the generations and cultures in one of the crucial aspects of the method. Teamwork helps to lower the bar - since a lot of trainers are scared of the technical part of the workshop, still it is embedded in creativity and introverts and strivers work together as a team.

The weeklong training is usually ending with a public screening. Italian wine, hospitality and the result of hard work at celebrated, leaving participants with stronger confidence in their digital skills.

Since when?

The method was established in 2012 and used in a number of trainings in Italian. In 2015 the first English workshop for facilitators had been held.

Target groups, national, international or local focus?

The unique aspect is the broad focus of the method. It is usable across all educational sectors and on all level. The trainings had been mainly held locally in Potenza and had been designed for Italian speaking facilitators. After providing the course in English during the Erasmus Plus partnership 'Applied Emotion - The artist within' the scope broadened to European level.

Digital aspects

The method consists out of an analog part, where storytelling technics and storyboarding is taught and a digital part, where the animations are created on the computer.

The teamwork helps to integrate learners with more or fewer digital competence and confidence.

While the trainer explain the tolls, set examples and answer questions, they become pure supervisors and mentors during the creation process. In the understanding of blended learning, the training combines the storytelling part, which is done offline with animation process. Alas the use of software produces a high barrier, the team setting and support ensures that every member will onboard the digital world.

The participants do not just learn in theory, but they have to practice their knowledge immediately, supported by a group which will benefit from the skills of each of its members in return. Providing the positive experience after experimenting with a digital tool, leaves space to reflect and repeat the learned.

When the workshop in Potenza ended, most of the participants stated, that they feel more competent in the digital world and boosted their creativity at the same time.

Pedagogic/methodological aspects

The workshop is focused on self-reflective learning in a group. The concept is based on the Kolb-Learning cycle on adult education,

which was described already before. The main learning outcomes are:

- enhanced team work
- Increased digital competences and confidence
- Higher ability to express yourself
- Fostered use of creativity

Further skills like presenting, storytelling, expression in talking and writing or participation benefit from this method.

Strength, weakness and opportunities

Strength

We identified throughout our evaluation a couple of strength of the method:

- The method is stimulating skills like team work, creativity, self and digital confidence.
- The method is suitable for any target group with different level of experience, age or education.
- The method is supporting professional and entrepreneurial development of trainer/teacher by providing animation techniques and software know-how.
- The method is empowering, providing learners with tools to tell their own stories.
- The method facilitate learning and teaching situation in a team,

meaning that every team member share their strength and skills will receiving support where they have lacks.

Weakness

Alas identified as a good practice, the tool bears a few weaknesses, which each trainer has to take in account.

- The methods relies on the access to sufficient computers and software. While open source software exist, they do not match up on commercial ones.
- The trainer has to be prepared to provide the learners with access to software and alternatives for different devices and price ranges, since the learners cannot repeat the learned afterwards.
- The trainer should be aware of the digital devices. The trainer do not have to master them but should know how to use them competently.
- The trainer has to be prepared for frustration and doubts of the learners.

Opportunities

The method combine creativity, which is associated with fun and intuitivity and animation, which is based on software and hard digital skills. This connection helps learners to break down the mental barriers between the two. Computer geeks start to think creatively, develop skills in art. At the same time artistic learners head over to the

hard digital skills. The method provides the opportunity to guide learners into new learning spheres, stimulating lifelong learning and generating synergies for the professional and personal development of the participants.

Animation for trainer - combining two worlds

The workshop concluded in a big party and the participants departed. A year later in the casual longtime evaluation, it was asked what is left. Mabou, a participant from the course went on with her professional development. Alas the animation was quite abstract to her, she was motivated to move towards film making. The storyboard exercises helped her to structure choreographies and the training made her aware of other ways to gain knowledge 'out of the box'. Ewelina felt that it enhanced her knowledge on programming, providing new tools for expressing her creativity. The strength of the method is that it overcomes the mental barriers for learning. The method is therefore highly recommended for organisations, teacher and trainer who want to challenge their learners to try out new content out of their comfort zone.

