Impact case study (REF3)

REF2021

Institution:
University of Gloucestershire

Unit of Assessment: 34

Title of case study: 'MYSTY': Digital Storytelling for Diversity Training in Schools

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2016

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):**	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:**
Dr Abigail Gardner	Associate Professor in Music and Media	2002 - 2020
Prof Joanne Garde-Hansen	Reader in Media	2002 - 2013

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017 - 2020

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

1. Summary of the impact

This case study focuses on the pedagogic impact of 'My Story' (**MYSTY**), an award-winning trans-national Erasmus + digital storytelling project focused on migration and minority experience, led by **Abigail Gardne**r www.mysty.eu. 83 children aged 12-7 from 4 secondary schools in Austria, Italy, Hungary, UK produced digital stories with the support of 16 teachers. The production and reception of these acted as a platform for diversity awareness and digital upskilling. MYSTY provided a transnational cross-sectional educational tool to enhance intercultural competency. It was a springboard for further digital storytelling initiatives, **Veterans Voices Gloucestershire** http://veteransvoicesglos.co.uk and **Mapping the Music of Migration** https://mamumi.eu/.

2. Underpinning research

Gardner's research in MYSTY focuses on the pedagogic impact of using digital storytelling for diversity training and cultural awareness in secondary school classrooms across Europe.
It is one of a series of digital storytelling **projects** that the University of Gloucestershire School of Media has led (2011– 2020). The driver for this research has been, and continues to be, the desire to **spotlight** under-represented lives and diverse communities. **Gardner** built on Professor Joanne **Garde-Hansen's** extensive underpinning research (2009 – 2012) on digital storytelling and memory, using the methodologies fundamental to digital storytelling to **provoke** affective engagement within the target group of teachers and pupils in four European secondary schools. Two of the schools were large state schools in city centres with high percentages of migrant pupils (Regina Margherita in Palermo and Baross Gabor in Budapest). Two were small independent schools, one of which was bilingual (St, Edwards School, Cheltenham and Gibs, Graz International Bilingual School).

Research across the MYSTY consortium revealed there were gaps in innovative teaching tools for understanding diversity. The project aimed to share and embed innovative teaching practice to enhance awareness of cultural diversity within each national context. The Paris Declaration 2015, acknowledges the major role of education in promoting inclusion and ownership of Europe's fundamental values and MYSTY was a simple yet very effective pedagogic means of fostering diversity awareness and intercultural competencies in both pupils and teachers.

Gardner is a music and media academic with research interests in community media. She has worked on five digital storytelling projects to date. A project with the local Jewish community and Everyman Theatre, 'My Jewish Storybook' (2016), whose focus was on 'food, family and festival'

set the scene for MYSTY, since it revealed how such categories enabled affective storytelling and pedagogic reflection. Her research continues a strong University of Gloucestershire Media School and UoA34 history in digital storytelling that include community memory projects http://www.bartonandtredworth.org.uk, (2011) and The Dennis Potter Heritage project https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/scapvc/ccmps/research/researchthemes/dphp/ (2008) led by **Garde-Hansen** (1 FTE Reader in Media 2002 – 31/3/13), now at Warwick University, and **Grist** (0.2 - 2020), now at Bristol University.

Gardner continues this tradition of digital storytelling with a diverse range of target groups. She worked with Age UK Gloucestershire on a project called Veterans Voices Gloucestershire, (www.veteransvoices.co.uk) and she has utilised digital storytelling as an impact assessing methodology in collaborations with the CCRI () to gauge
vulnerable participants' responses to their involvement on the GEM scheme (http://www.ccri.ac.uk/eventsseminars/going-the-extra-mile-in-monitoring-and-evaluation-the-gem-story/). Her Erasmus + funded project (2019 – 2021), 'Mapping the Music of Migration' https://mamumi.eu/) adapts digital storytelling methodologies to map out music inheritance across migratory routes. MYSTY was therefore a key project within the digital storytelling seam built collaboratively by **Garde-Hansen** and **Grist** that has informed **Gardner's** current and future digital storytelling trajectory.

3. References to the research

[R1] Garde-Hansen, J, Hoskins, A, Reading, A (2009): *Save As....Digital Memories* (Palgrave Macmillan)

[R2] Garde-Hansen, J (2011): *Media and Memory* (Edinburgh University Press)

[R3] Garde-Hansen, J. and McEwen, L. J., Krause, K., Jones, O. (2012) 'Sustainable Flood Memories: Informal Knowledges and the Development of Community Resilience to Future Flood Risk' In D. Proverbs, S. Mambretti, C. A. Brebbia and D. de Wrachien (eds.) *Flood Recovery, Innovation and Response III (*WIT Press: Ashurst) 253-264.

[R4] Gardner, A., Maierhofer, R., and Penz, H. 2019) *My Story. Digital Storytelling across Europe for Social Cohesion.* Current Trends in Digital Storytelling. pp. 235-243. ISSN ISBN 978-960-99791-5-3

4. Details of the impact

MYSTY **identified** a pan-European problem with attitudes towards migration and minority groups, **developed** innovative media technologies through digital storytelling to address this, and **enabled** minority groups to share their experiences.

Pathway to impact: 8 lead teachers in the four schools worked with 80 pupils aged 12-17 to collect photos of their family, food or festivals, which they shared in small groups before individually uploading them to a video editing platform (Premiere Pro or 'WeVideo'). Pupils at Gibs Bilingual School in Graz produced two user manuals for pupils at the other 3 schools on how to make a digital story, one for younger and one for older children. The technical team at UoG processed and subtitled these 83 stories and uploaded them to the website. Screening events took place at three schools attended by parents, governors and local councillors, Regina Margherita, 20.10.17, St Edwards, 23.11.17, Baross Gabor, 20.04.18.

The MYSTY project made an **affective difference** to teachers, pupils and parents involved. It gave pupils the agency to tell their stories using familiar digital tools in different ways. The project also **stimulated** them to learn new digital platforms, lead on the creation of user guides and produce digital stories. The processes of **co-creation** and co-listening that accompany the digital storytelling process introduced a new space in the classroom for diversity awareness.

MYSTY **changed** teachers' **attitudes** to the use of digital technology for storytelling. It facilitated pupils with minority backgrounds and different educational needs to embrace digital storytelling as a **new**, affective and **enabling** channel of communication.

MYSTY was a 'best practice' winner, an 'inspiring project' noted for its "**considerable impact** on the eight partners from across Europe involved in the activities" **(S10).**

AFFECTIVE and PEDAGOGIC IMPACT

- Digital storytelling 'made pupils feel important' (**S1**), and 'proud' (**S2**). MYSTY gave them control over their own narratives, gave them 'a voice' (**S3, S4**) and 'they felt their agency (**S2**). It was an **emancipatory** vehicle for children who find writing difficult (**S5**).

- MYSTY ushered in new cultures of **sharing**. Nicolina Cicizeno, lead at Regina Margherita School in the centre of Palermo, reported that pupils were more willing to **share** personal historical details as a result of being involved (**S1**). Parents at St Edwards also noted how affective this **sharing** was (S6).

- MYSTY **challenged** teachers to co-work with pupils and this increased **affective empathy** and **intergenerational dialogue** (**S7**). Lis Pöltzleitner is an experienced language teacher who had not expected MYSTY to reveal something new about her pupils but was surprised by how much MYSTY changed her relationships with them (**S7**).

- The **co-creation** and **co-listening** central to digital storytelling facilitated awareness of a wide array of diversities; migrant, (dis) able-bodied and inter-cultural **(S4, S5, S6).** In Baross Gabor school, Budapest, a pupil with ADHD's story was used for awareness raising amongst staff.

- Teaching staff and governors across the partnership **discovered** the potential pedagogic application of digital storytelling for less academic students. Patricia Clayfield, headmistress of St Edwards School, Cheltenham (now retired) expressed her surprise as its efficacy **(S8).**

DIGITAL IMPACT
- Pupils used familiar digital tools (phones) in different ways (creatively in the classroom) (S1).
- MYSTY **stimulated** pupils to learn new digital platforms, create user guides and produce and edit digital stories.

Dissemination, exploitation and application
- MYSTY has had pan-European **impact reach** and **application**. It enhanced the intercultural understanding of the **direct beneficiaries;** the 80 pupils, 8 lead teachers and further 200 staff and 3500 pupils of the schools on the project. It was exploited very effectively by the Austrian team (**S9, a, b, c, d**).

- **CESIE**, our Italian NGO project partner, managed the social media accounts. https://www.facebook.com/mysty.eu

- MYSTY **inspired** staff at The University of Graz to **stretch** the methodology and integrate digital storytelling into linguistics classes, English Studies on the topic of Environmental Communication, and Intercultural Communication and Aging Studies. In 2019 it continued to use the project's methods and **extend its impact**, at its Summer Schoolhttps://eurep.auth.gr/sites/default/files/summerSchools/GUSEGG%202019%20General%20Description%20%28Curriculum%29%20A4.pdf. A virtual seminar about digital storytelling at https://www.virtuelle-ph.at/ reached several hundred educators **(S9).**

- Pölzleitner **applied** MYSTY's methods to *Hochschule Steiermark*, where she now teaches. In Italy, minority groups used digital storytelling in workshops, to share and spread their migration experience to other communities, groups and schools. And Rogers Foundation is using them for of an anti-bullying campaign.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The following testimonials and reports have been included in the REF submission:

1. [S1] Audio testimonial from Nicolina Ciziceno, teacher at Regina Margherita, Palermo, Italy, describing how MYSTY made her students 'feel important' "and b) how Mysty has had intercultural and intergenerational impact: "Students from different classes, ages and communities have shared this experience enriching their emotional growth" (20.10.2017).

2. [S2] Audio testimonial from Virag Sujhada Executive Director Rogers Foundation for Person-Centred Education, describing how MYSTY has enabled her pupils to discover their own agency and voice (20.04,2018).

3. [S3] Testimonial from Andreas Schuch, University of Graz, describes how MYSTY has importantly given minority groups a voice: "Right now, there is a push happening on both local and national level in Austria to promote and fund projects in the educational sector linked to developing skills/engaging with aspects of intercultural competences and the use of digital technologies, which are both areas that DS aligns with nicely. In addition, DS projects in school and other settings allow especially (but not exclusively) minorities to tell stories about their lives, thus giving them a voice – an important cultural, social and democratic step" (1.9.2018).

4. [S4] Testimonial via FaceBook from Mr Zak Thorne, who was a teaching assistant St Edwards team. He describes how MYSTY was an invaluable experience for him, directly impacting his choice to train as a teacher. "I was inspired by how pupils positively responded to their personal stories, wanting to share their experiences, traditions and giving them a voice. This has had a great influence on Art projects in my teaching, particularly with identity projects. I believe that understanding and celebrating the variety of religions and cultures within our schools creates a more tolerant and accepting society". (24.01.2021).

5. [S5] Email from Mrs. Anna Burnett, a parent of St Edwards' School pupil involved in MYSTY described the impact on her son; "I know for…, it was a real boost to his confidence as he would have found it really difficult to write down his experiences but to speak them was so much more accessible for him. We thought the format was so effective and the stories both amusing and very moving". (27.11.2017).

6. [S6] Email from Mary Elizabeth Hunt, parent of St. Edwards School, Cheltenham, UK. (: "The St Edwards' Mysty Oscar event was delightful as well as enlightening. My son's peers shared tales of feasts, adoption, music festivals and loss. We learnt a lot about the children and the other families lives and customs in a succinct and entertaining way with all the accompanying photographs". (26.11.2017).

7. [S7] Audio testimonial from Dr Elizabeth Pöltzleitner, teacher at Gibs International School, Graz, Austria describing the positive impact MYSTY had on her working relationships with her pupils. "Despite knowing the 'kids' for over five years, she got to learn much more about them through this project (MYSTY). "For me the most interesting aspect of this project is the deep level of personalization and engagement. I had done all kinds of digital work and story writing projects with my students before, but this project was different. The students engaged on a more personal and deeper level and got to know one another much better – even though they had been together for 5 years. It is

this sharing of personally important stories, that makes this project stand out for me" (20.04.2018).

8. [S8] Testimonial from Patricia Clayfield, Headmistress, St Edwards Senior School, Cheltenham, Email (11.01.2018) remarks how. "The power of digital storytelling is something that has surprised us all and it definitely inspired our pupils' and had been particularly successful for the 'less able pupils' (S8).

9. [S9b] Email from Andreas Schuch University of Graz on how they have incorporated digital storytelling into a diverse range of disciplines "Roberta, Hermine and I applied digital storytelling in several university courses across several semesters, including "Researching Intercultural Experience in Higher Education" (SS20, WS19, SS19, WS18, SS18?). We're currently planning digital storytelling project to have students at school and university talk in digital stories how their daily lives were impacted by the measures of the Austrian government as a reaction to the COVID 19 outbreak".

10. [S10] Report from Erasmus+ LON confirming that MYSTY had 'considerable impact' across the Partner countries involved (12.02.2019).