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Perspectives of Junior High School Teachers on the Use of Digital Storytelling: Basis for School-Based Training

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Abstract

This study examined the perspectives of junior high school teachers on the use of digital storytelling as an instructional strategy for developing historical literacy among learners. It was anchored on constructivist and socio-cultural learning principles, emphasizing knowledge construction through interaction, narrative, and technology integration. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, involving four (4) junior high school teachers from Rondina-Atendido National High School. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and themes related to teachers' experiences in integrating digital storytelling into classroom instruction. Findings revealed that teachers generally perceive digital storytelling as an effective instructional tool that enhances lesson delivery, improves student engagement, and supports deeper understanding of historical concepts. It was found to strengthen instructional effectiveness through multimedia integration such as images, videos, and narration, which contributed to improved learner attention, motivation, and knowledge retention. The study also identified that digital storytelling supports differentiated instruction by addressing varied learning styles and providing remediation for learners with difficulties in focus and comprehension. However, several challenges were also reported, including limited ICT resources, insufficient digital literacy among teachers, time constraints in lesson preparation, and occasional technical and connectivity issues. Despite these challenges, teachers employed adaptive strategies such as collaboration, contextualized lesson design, and continuous learning to effectively implement digital storytelling in their classrooms. The study concludes that digital storytelling is a valuable pedagogical approach that promotes interactive, inclusive, and learner-centered instruction, particularly in history-related subjects. It further supports the need for structured training programs and institutional support to strengthen teachers' competencies in integrating digital tools into instruction. A Learning Action Cell (LAC)-based training program was identified as a key output to enhance sustainable implementation and instructional improvement. In relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the study is aligned with SDG 4 (Quality Education) through the promotion of innovative teaching strategies and teacher capacity development. It also supports SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by encouraging the integration of digital tools in education, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by fostering more inclusive learning opportunities for diverse learners through multimedia-based instruction. The sustainability impact of the study is primarily educational and institutional, as it strengthens teacher professional development, enhances instructional practices, and supports long-term integration of technology-driven pedagogy in public secondary education.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Digital Storytelling, Historical Literacy, Instructional Strategy, Junior High School Teachers, Phenomenological Research, Qualitative Study, Thematic Analysis, Technology Integration

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed global education systems, requiring educators to integrate pedagogical approaches that combine content knowledge, pedagogy, and technology. Traditional history instruction, often characterized by lecture-based and memorization-driven approaches, has been criticized for limiting learner engagement and higher-order thinking development (Purwoto & Kurniawan, 2025). As a result, historical literacy—the ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate historical events—has become a critical learning outcome (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Digital storytelling has emerged as a significant instructional innovation that integrates multimedia elements such as text, images, audio, and video into narrative construction (Robin, 2008; Khan, 2017). It shifts learners from passive recipients of knowledge to active creators of meaning, promoting constructivist learning and deeper cognitive engagement. DST has been shown to enhance creativity, motivation, and critical thinking by allowing learners to construct and communicate historical narratives in meaningful ways. In the Philippine context, the implementation of learner-centered curricula such as the MATATAG Curriculum emphasizes the need for technology-integrated instruction. DST aligns with these reforms by supporting digital literacy, communication skills, and contextualized learning experiences. Despite its potential, its implementation is highly dependent on teacher competence, resource availability, and institutional support, which remain uneven across schools.

Existing literature consistently identifies DST as an effective pedagogical tool that enhances engagement and learning outcomes. International studies highlight its capacity to promote collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking through multimodal learning environments (Robin, 2016; Ohler, 2013; Smeda, Dakich, & Sharda, 2014). DST supports constructivist learning theory by enabling learners to actively construct knowledge through narrative and multimedia integration (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). In history education, DST strengthens historical literacy by fostering skills such as sourcing, contextualization, and perspective-taking (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Wineburg, 2001). Studies show that learners engaged in DST activities demonstrate improved understanding of historical causation, empathy, and analytical reasoning (Frazel, 2010; Lambert, 2013; Kelly & Blevins, 2016). Additionally, DST enhances motivation and retention by integrating emotional and cognitive learning processes (Hung, Hwang, & Huang, 2012; Yang & Wu, 2012).

Globally, DST has been widely adopted in education systems across the United States, Europe, and Asia as a strategy for enhancing 21st-century skills. Research consistently demonstrates its effectiveness in improving academic performance, engagement, and historical thinking skills across diverse learner populations. Locally, Philippine studies confirm similar findings. DST has been shown to improve student engagement, comprehension, and creativity in Araling Panlipunan and related subjects (Abelon, 2022; Morales, 2022). It aligns with DepEd initiatives such as the Digital Rise Program and MATATAG Curriculum, which promote ICT integration in instruction. Filipino learners benefit from DST as it enables contextualized and culturally relevant learning experiences, particularly in history education (Santos & Ramirez, 2021; Garcia & Villanueva, 2021). Despite these advancements, implementation challenges persist, including limited ICT resources, varying teacher competencies, and infrastructure constraints, especially in rural schools.

The study is anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory and Socio-Cultural Theory. Constructivism (Bruner, 1996) posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and meaning-making processes. DST aligns with this theory by allowing learners to create narratives that integrate cognitive and emotional understanding. Vygotsky's (1978) Socio-Cultural Theory further emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative meaning construction. DST supports this by encouraging group-based storytelling, peer feedback, and shared knowledge production. These theoretical foundations position DST as a tool that promotes active, collaborative, and reflective learning.

Although extensive literature supports the effectiveness of DST in improving historical literacy and learner engagement, several gaps remain. First, most studies are conducted in well-resourced international contexts where ICT infrastructure is stable, limiting their applicability to rural Philippine schools. Second, existing research often focuses on student outcomes rather than teachers lived experiences in implementing DST. There is also limited evidence on how DST is sustained in real classroom conditions, particularly under resource constraints and varying digital competencies among teachers. Furthermore, few studies examine DST within the framework of the MATATAG Curriculum and current DepEd reforms. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on junior high school teachers' perspectives in a rural Philippine context, providing insights into practical implementation, challenges, and instructional strategies.

The study aligns primarily with SDG 4: Quality Education, as it promotes innovative and inclusive teaching strategies that enhance instructional effectiveness and learner engagement. It supports SDG 4.c by contributing to teacher professional development through the proposed Learning Action Cell (LAC) training framework. It also aligns with SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure by encouraging the integration of digital technologies in classroom instruction. Additionally, it supports SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities by promoting equitable access to engaging learning experiences through multimedia-based instruction, particularly in resource-limited educational settings.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by promoting instructional approaches that enhance long-term learning outcomes and teacher capacity. It supports technological sustainability through the integration of digital tools in teaching and learning processes, fostering adaptive and future-ready education systems. It also contributes to socio-cultural sustainability by enabling learners to engage with historical narratives in ways that strengthen cultural awareness and identity formation. Furthermore, it promotes institutional sustainability by informing school-based training programs and policy development aimed at improving ICT integration in education. Overall, the study positions digital storytelling as a transformative pedagogical strategy that supports sustainable, inclusive, and innovation-driven education systems, particularly within the Philippine junior high school context.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design to explore and understand teachers' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions regarding digital storytelling in teaching. A phenomenological approach was applied to describe and interpret the lived experiences of teachers as they integrate digital storytelling into classroom instruction. This design allowed in-depth exploration of contextual and complex instructional experiences and supported the identification of emerging patterns and themes related to digital storytelling implementation.

2.2 Locale of the Study
The study was conducted at Rondina-Atendido National High School in Barangay Nabangig, Municipality of Palanas, Province of Masbate under the Department of Education (DepEd) Masbate Division. The school is a public secondary institution implementing the K–12 program and the MATATAG Curriculum. It was selected due to its rural context, which provides relevant conditions for examining curriculum implementation, ICT integration, and instructional practices in real classroom settings.

2.3 Respondents of the Study
The respondents were junior high school teachers of Rondina-Atendido National High School who have experience using or integrating digital storytelling in Araling Panlipunan or related subjects. Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in instructional practices involving digital storytelling and their capacity to provide relevant insights on its implementation.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure
A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. This non-probability sampling method was appropriate for identifying individuals with relevant experience and knowledge of digital storytelling. The study included approximately four (4) junior high school teachers or until data saturation was achieved, where no new themes emerged from additional interviews.

2.5 Research Instrument
The primary data collection tool was a semi-structured interview guide. It enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth qualitative data while maintaining consistency across participants. The guide included sections on demographic information, implementation of digital storytelling, and perceived benefits and challenges. The instrument was subjected to expert validation and may have undergone pilot testing to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure
Permission to conduct the study was secured from the school administration. Participants were informed of the study purpose, procedures, and voluntary participation. Selected teachers were scheduled for interviews conducted face-to-face or online, lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and verified for accuracy. Data were securely stored, and participant identities were protected using pseudonyms.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques
Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcripts were repeatedly reviewed to identify significant statements related to digital storytelling. These were coded and grouped into categories, which were further organized into emerging themes reflecting teachers' perspectives, experiences, and challenges. Themes were refined to ensure clarity and relevance, and findings were presented using narrative descriptions supported by participant responses.

2.8 Ethical Considerations
The study adhered to ethical standards guided by CHED Memorandum Order No. 15, Series of 2019, ensuring respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, with identities protected through pseudonyms. The study also ensured non-maleficence by avoiding harmful or intrusive procedures and maintained research integrity through truthful reporting of findings.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1 Teachers' Perspectives on the Use of Digital Storytelling
3.1.1 Instructional Effectiveness
Teachers reported that digital storytelling improved instructional delivery by making lessons more engaging, visual, and meaningful. Responses indicated that multimedia elements such as videos, images, narration, and student-created outputs enhanced comprehension, attention, and retention. Teachers also noted its usefulness in accommodating different learning styles and supporting learners with difficulty in focus and memory. The findings indicate that digital storytelling functions as an effective audio-visual instructional strategy that strengthens lesson delivery and supports differentiated learning. This aligns with Robin (2008; 2016), who emphasized that multimedia storytelling enhances meaning-making and engagement. Similarly, Smeda, Dakich, and Sharda (2014) found that digital storytelling promotes deeper understanding through interactive and constructivist learning environments. Ohler (2013) further supports that multimedia integration improves

motivation and accommodates diverse learners. The results suggest that digital storytelling enhances both general instruction and remediation for struggling learners by improving cognitive access to content.

3.1.2 Learner Engagement and Motivation

Teachers observed increased student engagement, motivation, and participation when digital storytelling was used. Learners became more attentive, actively participated in discussions, and showed enthusiasm in collaborative and creative tasks. Video-based and interactive storytelling activities were particularly noted to generate lively classroom interaction. The findings demonstrate that digital storytelling enhances learner engagement by transforming passive classrooms into interactive learning environments. Robin (2016) noted that multimedia storytelling sustains learner attention and interest, while Smeda et al. (2014) emphasized increased motivation through active content creation. Abelon (2022) and Morales (2022) similarly reported improved participation and engagement among Filipino learners exposed to digital storytelling. This suggests that DST supports learner-centered instruction by fostering interaction, collaboration, and sustained motivation.

3.1.3 Enhancement of Critical Thinking and Creativity

Teachers reported that digital storytelling encouraged learners to express ideas creatively, understand abstract concepts more easily, and participate actively in constructing narratives. Students demonstrated improved conceptual understanding, increased retention, and more active engagement during discussions. The findings indicate that digital storytelling strengthens both critical thinking and creativity by enabling learners to construct and interpret knowledge through multimedia. Robin (2016) highlighted that DST promotes critical thinking through structured narrative creation. Ohler (2013) emphasized its role in creative synthesis of knowledge, while Smeda et al. (2014) found that multimedia storytelling enhances higher-order thinking skills. Seixas and Morton (2013) further support that historical understanding develops when learners actively interpret and construct meaning, which aligns with DST-based learning.

3.1.4 Integration of Technology in Teaching

Teachers described digital storytelling as an effective tool for integrating technology into instruction. It was used to reinforce lessons, enhance engagement, and make learning more relevant and meaningful. Teachers also reported positive experiences, noting that students found storytelling activities engaging and relatable to real-life contexts. The findings show that digital storytelling serves as an effective mechanism for technology integration in classroom instruction. Robin (2016) emphasized that DST enhances learning through the meaningful use of digital tools, while Ohler (2013) noted that it strengthens digital literacy and instructional innovation. Smeda et al. (2014) further confirmed that DST promotes active engagement through technology-supported learning environments. In the Philippine context, Abelon (2022) and Morales (2022) found that DST improves both engagement and learning outcomes, supporting its relevance under current curriculum reforms.

3.2 Synthesis of Findings

Overall, digital storytelling emerged as a multidimensional instructional strategy that enhances instructional effectiveness, learner engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and technology integration. The strongest emphasis among participants was on its ability to transform traditional instruction into interactive, multimedia-based learning experiences that support diverse learners and improve participation and comprehension.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that teachers perceive digital storytelling as an effective instructional strategy in junior high school, with significant contributions to instructional effectiveness, learner engagement and motivation, critical thinking, creativity, and technology integration. The identified themes—Effective Audio-Visual Instruction, Interactive Learning, Development of Critical Thinking and Creativity, and Effective Technology Integration—confirm its value as a learner-centered pedagogical approach that enhances both teaching and learning outcomes. However, its implementation is constrained by limited technological resources, low digital literacy among teachers and learners, time and workload pressures, and inadequate ICT infrastructure, indicating that institutional and systemic support is essential. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrate adaptability through collaborative practices, proactive planning, professional development, contextualized instruction, and resource maximization, highlighting the importance of teacher innovation in sustaining digital storytelling in resource-limited settings.

It is recommended that Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions be utilized as a structured support mechanism to strengthen the teaching of history and improve historical literacy among junior high school learners based on teachers' positive experiences with digital storytelling. Continuous professional development programs should be provided, focusing on digital storytelling tools, instructional integration strategies, and content development to address gaps in digital competence and teaching capability. Schools should also prioritize investment in essential technological infrastructure such as computers, software, and display devices, while ensuring equitable access through shared resources or BYOD schemes

with support mechanisms for disadvantaged learners. In addition, improvements in internet connectivity and power stability should be prioritized through enhanced Wi-Fi systems and backup solutions to minimize instructional disruptions. Finally, DepEd and curriculum developers should formalize the integration of digital storytelling into the junior high school history curriculum by providing clear guidelines and implementation frameworks to support consistent classroom application.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study complied with recognized ethical standards for human-participant research by ensuring voluntary participation with informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and strict confidentiality through anonymous, secure, and aggregated data handling. Given the focus on psychological well-being, procedures were non-invasive, and safeguards were observed to minimize discomfort, with guidance to appropriate support services when needed, and required institutional permissions were secured for instrument use and access to academic records.

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