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Telling Small Stories with Power Point As Video In Lockdown

Jo Perry
Manukau Institute of Technology
jo.perry@manukau.ac.nz

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Abstract:

The 2020 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns came as a shock nationally and internationally. As a result, the change in approaches to teaching for many was fast and absolute. One minute the face-to-face ethos was humming along as 'normal', the next it was fully on line and taking teachers and students into a story many would never have considered. This brought with it the challenge of continuing to build and maintain relationships with the students in order to support their road to success. Storytelling has always been an important part of my practice in developing relationships through sharing my own experiences and encouraging the students to share theirs. In this way, we co-construct understanding of the class content and get to know each other. Going into fully online teaching would potentially change this.

Given the speed of the changes required, this project was never meant to be overtly innovative but was designed to allow me to continue using narratives of content and practice to build communities of learning in the online environment. As a teacher, Power Point was familiar, so I started there and simply changed to saving them as mp4 files.

The presentation plots this journey as a teacher taking storytelling from a face-to-face classroom across the lockdown in a way that continued supporting relationships and learning. The first attempts showed me that online stories are not the same as class power points where I physically created the narrative that linked the slides together. As I viewed my first attempt, it became clear that I was trying to tell a story that was in my head but not translated to the screen and I needed to adopt an approach that clearly spoke to a listener/audience i.e. my community of learning. I learned that, up to this point, I had used power point as a guide as I wove a story around the weekly content in a face-to-face classroom. In other words, the whole thing was heavily dependent on me. In this new environment, the story had to be told in a different way. It had to stand as a discrete artefact on its own, speaking to anyone that logged on, enabling me to reach out to that other human being without the unique connection that develops between story-teller and listener in the face to face world. Through three more cycles of research, I found that this new kind of story depended on a delicate balance between visual and oral, the context, content and the affective and how each was portrayed. Ultimately, the focus had to remain on the relationships I could build and the impact they could have. Therefore, this project came to be about keeping storytelling, whether face-to-face or online, “a uniquely human experience through which people make sense of past experience, convey emotions and ultimately connect with each other” (Christianson, 2011, p. 289).

References

Christianson, A. (2011) Storytelling and professional learning: A phenomenographic study of student's experience of patients' digital stories in nurse education. *Nurse Education Today*, 31, 289-293.