Authentic Assessment Through Digital Storyworld Scenarios

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A narrative storytelling approach to experiential learning is central to the digital storyworld scenario framing authentic assessment. The digital scenarios are not only resources for framing assessments, but authentic situations based on industry-required skills and competencies as reflected through a microbusiness model such as would be common in the arts and humanities in freelancing, sole trader or small group startups or project-based events. To shape authentic assessment around creative microbusiness entities, they need to be set up as a digital story, which, imagination- and immersion-wise, provides reality-based contexts for the assessments. This chapter considers digital stories or scenario-based situations developed as a model across communications, professional and creative writing, editing and publishing and writing for games at the undergraduate level in higher education. These are diverse industry sectors, but the digital model is a flexible creative microbusiness entity encouraging learning that is relevant, interdisciplinary and responsive to a changing world of work.

CONTEXT

Contemporary university learners, particularly in the arts and humanities disciplines, are preparing for what Bennett (2009) describes as work behaviours and markers of success perceived 'in terms of self-identity, intrinsic success and the meeting of personal and professional needs' (p.311). This encourages learners to find a portfolio career approach that is flexible and responsive to a rapidly changing work environment. As Le Rossignol & Kelly (2023) explore with their focus on a future career ecosystem, 'Student agency and developing a student's capability to demonstrate their contribution and value, is central to graduate employability' (p.160). The concept of student agency and preparing students to demonstrate both their contribution and value, is best embedded in that nexus between the assessment and some version of real-life settings. To ensure the authentic assessment is immersive and relevant to learners, scenarios that utilise digital storytelling strategies provide the potential for exploring possibilities and enabling personal and professional skills requirements to emerge from and become a strong element of that learning.

SCOPING AUTHENTICITY IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In terms of this chapter, the concept of authenticity in relation to learning integrates realism, contextualisation and problematisation, paralleled with assessing the disciplinary or curricular content, which may be evidenced from a professional area such as nursing (for example Benner et al., 2009; Raymond et al., 2013). Wiggins (1990) links realism to 'linking knowledge with everyday life and work', contextualised to situations 'where knowledge can be applied in an analytical and thoughtful way' to solve a problem or meet a need (quoted in Villarroel et al. 2017, p. 842). Authentic assessment, integrating this concept of realism, contextualisation and problematisation, is a desirable approach well suited to combine the disciplinary skills and content with tasks and performance requirements in the world of work. The issue of such assessment is to illustrate to the learners the transferability of their own everyday life and work, their situations and the solving of a problem as integral to understanding the discipline content of their study. Experiential approaches which are linked to narrative storytelling have the capacity to engage the learners emotionally as well as to structure the authenticity of their learning tasks.

The pragmatic educational philosopher John Dewey approaches learning as a cycle of experience, where there is the capacity to ask a question of the learning environment or content influenced by the learner's experience, to investigate, create some responses or reactions then discuss and reflect. Dewey (1938) urges educators to 'utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them

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