

Chapter 3

The Effect of Digital Storytelling Activities Used in a Social Studies Course on Student Engagement and Motivation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the effect of digital storytelling activities used in the Social Studies course on student engagement and motivation. To this end, a quasi-experimental pattern with pre-test and post-test control group design was used in the study. A total of 119 students were included in the study. The motivation scale and the engagement scale were used for data collection in the 10 week implementation. According to the results of the study, the students who participated in digital storytelling activities were more active in the learning process, spent more effort, had increased communication and interaction with their teachers and friends, and spent more time for activities within the scope of the Social Studies course compared to the control group students. Additionally, the use of digital storytelling in the Social Studies course was found to be more effective compared to the regular course program in terms of improving motivation.

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INTRODUCTION

In the present day, which is referred to as the digital age, students must be provided with social and participative learning environments supported with rich multimedia content to allow them to have active learning experiences (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). It is asserted that the two most important factors to ensure a successful learning process are student engagement and motivation toward the course (Crosling, Heagney & Thomas, 2009; Newman, 1992; Yang & Wu, 2012). It is more difficult in some courses to have students actively engaged in the knowledge construction process and to ensure they are motivated; social studies is one of these courses. It is pointed out in various studies that the social studies course usually involves an intensive information transfer and students remain passive in this process (Altınışık & Orhan 2002; Arslan 2006; Russell, 2010; Yanpar, 1997; Yiğit, 2007). Furthermore, it is reported in the literature that the Social studies course, which usually involves teacher- and subject-centered approaches, is viewed as a dull course requiring rote learning (Akengin, Sağlam & Dilek, 2002; Altınışık & Orhan 2002; Arslan 2006; Heafner, 2004; Karakuş, 2006; Russell, 2010; Yanpar, 1997; Yiğit, 2007). However, one of the most important conditions to carry out the Social studies course effectively is to ensure active student engagement in the learning process (Sönmez, 1997). To achieve this objective, it is necessary to provide learners with opportunities to control their own learning. However, it is quite difficult to ensure this diversity in a crowded class environment (Saritepeci & Çakır, 2015).

In such cases, instructional technologies [IT] may make great contributions for the provision of rich learning experiences (Tezci & Perkmen, 2013). Here, IT does not refer to presenting information for learners via various software, but rather refers to a production process which demonstrates how they construct their own knowledge within the scope of any content (Sadik, 2008; Tezci & Perkmen, 2013). This style of IT use, also referred to as meaningful technology integration, is defined as the integration of authentic tasks, which allow students to construct their own meaning consciously and actively, based on their own experiences with the curriculum (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999). In this way, IT may help students engage in learning situations by increasing their interest in the course (Hung, Hwang, & Huang, 2012; Lowenthal & Dunlap, 2010; Stacey & Hardy, 2011). After all, the active engagement of the student in learning activities is crucially important in an effective technology integration (Dexter, Anderson & Becker, 1999). In support of this idea, various studies point out the necessity of presenting meaningful activities in learning-teaching environments in order to ensure positive student attitudes, active student engagement and student motivation (Schunk, Meece & Pintrich, 2012; Svinicki, 2004; Yang & Wu, 2012).

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