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DICO Toolkit for Digital Career Stories

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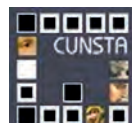
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DICO Toolkit for Digital Career Stories

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Digital Storytelling as a narrative approach to identity and career construction

Pirita Juppi*

Abstract

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a participatory, narrative, and art-based practice that has been applied for various purposes and in various institutional contexts. In higher education institutions, it has many uses. Besides building various skills, DST requires and develops reflexivity, and through self-reflection increases students' self-awareness and supports their identity work. This chapter explores how DST can be used for career construction and for developing students' professional identity. The practice is discussed within the broader framework of narrative theory and practice, on one hand, and in the framework of career guidance and counselling on the other. The chapter suggests that in the era of increasingly fragmented and insecure work and careers, new practices are needed to support young adults as they study, graduate, and enter and navigate their working life and various occupational transitions. The need is high especially among the arts and culture students and in other fields in which so called portfolio careers are becoming common. Creating and sharing multimodal career stories in a facilitated group-based process, using the method of DST, can provide a useful tool for career counselling in educational institutions.

* Pirita Juppi, Principal lecturer in media, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Arts Academy, Linnankatu, 54, 20100 Turku, Finland, e-mail: pirita.juppi@turkuamk.fi.

1. *Introduction*

The drastic changes in work and careers have aroused plenty of attention and discussion in public life, among scholars, and in educational institutions. According to researchers and other experts, working life and labour markets have become fragmented, insecure and hybrid; forms of employment as well as sources of income have become diversified, and individual careers often consist of short-term contracts, part-time work, multiple job holding, and self-employment¹.

Fragmentation of working life does not affect all individuals and social groups in the same way, and short-term and multiple jobs and self-employment may be experienced differently by different individuals. For some, they may be voluntary choices, where as for others they are a necessity caused by the structural changes in society and in the labour market². On one hand, these developments may signify more freedom, flexibility and meaningful job opportunities, but on the other, for many people they bring insecurity, scarcity of income and vulnerability at times of social and economic instability and crisis³. That is why critics have described current trends using the terms “precarisation”, “precariat” and “precarious work”⁴.

In some professions, especially among artists and cultural workers, these tendencies have been prominent already for decades and are expected to prevail also in the years to come⁵. In the 21st century they have, however, become more general trends that concern highly educated and skilled professionals in various fields. Researchers have described this transformation of professional careers using the concept of “portfolio career”⁶. Portfolio careers consists of multiple project-based jobs and assignments and thus of multiple sources of income. Besides economic insecurity, they subject individuals to the risk of having to accept jobs and tasks that are outside of their core competences and might not seem meaningful to them⁷. Or as Arja Haapakorpi puts it, to «a risk of unemployment, underemployment and degrading work»⁸.

Along with the transformations of work, professions and careers, professional identities have also been transformed. Traditional collective identities related to permanent full-time jobs have been largely replaced by fragmented

¹ E.g., ILO 2017; Jakonen 2014; Kiiski Karaja 2017; Soininen 2015.

² Järvensivu 2020; Järvensivu, Pulkki 2020; Soininen 2015; Throsby, Zednik 2011.

³ Jakonen 2014; Järvensivu 2020; Scillio 2017; Soininen 2015.

⁴ See e.g. Gill, Pratt 2008; Jakonen 2014.

⁵ E.g., Alper, Wassal 2006; Hirvi-Ijäs *et al.* 2020, pp. 19-25; Ruusuvirta *et al.* 2022, pp. 101-106; Throsby, Zednik 2011.

⁶ E.g., Haapakorpi 2022; Munnelly 2022; Stokes 2021.

⁷ See Haapakorpi 2022; Munnelly 2022; Stokes 2021.

⁸ Haapakorpi 2022, p. 443.

and flexible individual professional identities⁹. Especially in fields such as arts and culture, a person's professional identity is intrinsically linked to their personal identity, since creative work is highly personal, has internal purposes instead of mere instrumental value, and is regarded as an essential part of life and selfhood¹⁰. This also holds true for many other high-skilled and -educated professionals.

The “age of uncertainty”¹¹ and the related demands for flexibility and adaptability put young people entering the labour market after graduation in a tough situation. Even though many different actors and institutions, from private companies to public sector employment authorities, provide career guidance and counselling services, in case of youth, educational institutions play a key role in supporting career construction. Awareness of this critical role has led teachers and student and career counsellors to look for new approaches that would prepare young people to face the uncertainty of working life and the expected several career transitions. It has been suggested that there is a need for holistic career counselling practices that consider the whole life story and life situation of an individual¹².

In this chapter, I explore the potential of Digital Storytelling to support identity and career construction of higher education students. Digital Storytelling is a specific narrative approach that relies on a group-based process and uses multimodal stories for self-reflection and sharing among the group members¹³. I understand both, identity and career, as constructs which are constituted in narrative practices. The concept of “career construction” highlights that career is not just a sequence of jobs in an individual's life, but a subjective experience, and individuals make sense of their career through storytelling. I will use narrative theory and career construct theory, as well as studies on narrative career interventions, to explain the rationale for using Digital Storytelling in the context of career counselling. The chapter is mainly based on a literature review but I will also make use of years of experience in organising Digital Storytelling workshops which focus on students' careers and professional identities¹⁴.

⁹ E.g., Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen 2006; Eteläpelto *et al.* 2007.

¹⁰ E.g., Ansio, Houni 2013; Banks 2016; Hägg 2011, pp. 81-85; Kosonen 2018, pp. 1-8.

¹¹ Silva 2012.

¹² E.g., Marttila 2016; Näre 2020, pp. 36-37; Savickas *et al.* 2009, p. 244.

¹³ Ilona Tanskanen discusses and presents other autobiographical and narrative practices, specifically creative writing and diary writing practices, in her chapters in this Toolkit (Tanskanen 2023a; 2023b).

¹⁴ We have organised Digital Storytelling workshops for the master's students of Turku University of Applied Sciences' Art Academy since 2015. The Digital Storytelling workshop has been a starting point for a longer reflective process that we refer to as a “professional autobiographical process”, “process of professional growth” or “career story”, depending on the study programme in question (see Juppi *et al.* forthcoming 2023; Juppi, Tanskanen 2019; Tanskanen 2023a). These art-based and reflective practices have been further developed in the pilots of the DICO project.

2. Narrative theory and narrative identity

Narrative theory and its key concepts, such as narrative and narrativity, have been widely adopted and applied in various disciplines and professional fields in past decades. What originated in the 1960s and 1970s as literary narratology has since spread to disciplines such as historiography, education, psychology, social/cultural psychology, sociology and other social sciences¹⁵. Increases in the popularity of narrative theory and analyses in different fields in 1980s have been described as a narrative turn¹⁶.

Along with the narrative turn, the focus shifted from the structural analyses of literary text, typical of classical narratology, towards new “post-classical” approaches interested in the narrative practice: the act of reading and telling stories and the mental processes involved in it, as well as the importance of narratives for making sense of our experiences and the world, and constituting human existence¹⁷. Contemporary interdisciplinary narrative theory and analyses have widened the scope from literary fiction to various forms and platforms of stories and storytelling, such as journalism and social media, and also adopted perspectives critical of stories and storytelling¹⁸.

Narrative theorists see storytelling as an act of meaning-making and sense-making. Scholars across disciplines emphasise the importance of stories in creating a certain level of coherence, continuity and unity in our life experiences, and their crucial role in creation of individual and group identities¹⁹. A key concept in narrative theory has, indeed, been that of narrative identity, which has been an object of interest for example in narrative psychology, social psychology, linguistics and education.

Narrative theorists see identity as a socially constituted and constantly evolving narrative construct. Storytelling and identity work are inextricably intertwined: stories we tell about ourselves – to others as well as to ourselves – express our identity and at the same time they constitute our identity²⁰. These narratives about the self have been referred to as self-narratives, self stories,

¹⁵ Hatavara *et al.* 2013, pp. 2-5; Hyvärinen 2013, p. 13; Meretoja 2013, p. 94.

¹⁶ Most commonly researchers talk about the narrative turn in a singular form, placing it in 1980s (see e.g., Freeman 2013, p. 43; Meretoja 2013). Hyvärinen (2013, p. 13), however, suggests that there are rather several narrative turns: the first one in literature is from 1960s to 1970s, the second in historiography in 1970s, and the latest one in social sciences, psychology and education in early 1980s.

¹⁷ See Hatavara *et al.* 2013, pp. 2-5; Hyvärinen 2013; Meretoja 2013, pp. 95-111. These transformations in narrative theory and analyses are described in detail also in other chapters of *Travelling Concepts of Narrative* (Hyvärinen *et al.* 2013) from the perspectives of different disciplines.

¹⁸ See e.g., iNARR 2022.

¹⁹ E.g., Ihanus 2015, p. 4; Linde 1993, 2009; McAdams 1993.

²⁰ E.g., Ibarra Insead, Barbulescu 2010; Linde 1993, p. 3; McAdams, McLean 2013, pp. 233.

life stories, personal myths, or autobiographies by various scholars and narrative practitioners²¹.

Dan McAdams and Kate McLean define a person's narrative identity as an internalised, integrative and evolving life story²². "Integrative" refers to a narrative's potential to create coherence and unity between isolated events, episodes, and experiences in a person's life, as well as the past, present and future. As McAdams and McLean formulate it:

Narrative identity reconstructs the autobiographical past and imagines the future in such a way as to provide a person's life with some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning. Thus, a person's life story synthesizes episodic memories with envisioned goals, creating a coherent account of identity in time²³.

In a self-narrative – as in any narrative – coherence and unity are not created only through temporal relationships and chronological arrangement of events, but also through causal relationships. Through storytelling, we can make sense of motivations, reasons, causes and effects of various episodes. As Charlotte Linde puts it, a person's life story «does not consist simply of a collection of facts or incidents. It also requires sequence, since from sequence causality can be inferred; and notions like causality, accident, and reasons are crucial in shaping the meaning of a life story»²⁴.

Coherence and unity, however, do not mean that an individual's identity would be static and remain the same over time and across different contexts. Quite the opposite: narrative identity theorists emphasise the dynamic, dialogic and contextual nature of a person's identity. An individual's identity is not built in a social vacuum, but in dialogue with the social and cultural environment: in various situations of social interaction and in relation to cultural meanings and model stories available in an individual's social surroundings²⁵. Narrative identity changes over time, and people tell different kinds of stories of themselves to different audiences in different situations, thereby constructing different versions of themselves²⁶. This does not mean that those stories and identities are not authentic or "true", but rather they reflect the fragmented, plural and dynamic nature of identity. Different elements of an individual's identity are essential in different contexts and communication situations.

Active narrative identity work is called for especially at times of crucial turning points and transitions in life – such as when starting university stud-

²¹ Ibarra Insead, Barbulescu 2010; Ihanus 2015, pp. 4-5; Linde 1993; McAdams 1993.

²² McAdams, McLean 2013, p. 233.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Linde 1993, p. 8.

²⁵ E.g., Benwell, Stokoe 2006, p. 139; Hänninen 2000, pp. 50-53; Kuusipalo 2008, p. 54; Linde 1993, p. 4.

²⁶ Benwell, Stokoe 2006, p. 238; Linde 1993, p. 4.

ies, graduating and entering working life, starting a family or retiring from work. Also in working life, people may face several critical transitions or even crises. Changing the profession, the employer or the position within an organisation requires self-reflection and identity work. Self-narratives help people revise and reconstruct their professional identities during work role transitions²⁷. Losing a job requires even more narrative identity work, since work is such an important part of the identity for most people. Unemployment causes an interruption in the life story of the individual and calls for narrative reorientation²⁸.

Narrative theory and methods have been adopted by career counselling professionals as well as academic researchers of work and careers. In research, narrative methods have been applied to study the individual's experience of their work and careers as expressed in interviews or other accounts, such as written career stories²⁹. In professional practice, narrative approaches have been used in various interventions with career counselling clients. In the following section, I focus on the latter, the practical applications of narrative theory.

3. *Narrative approaches in career counselling*

Narrative approaches have become popular in several professional fields, such as in psychotherapy, education, organisational development, career counselling and other fields of counselling. Their popularity relies on the basic ideas of narrative theory described above: narratives are seen as a powerful tool for making sense of ourselves (in our various private and professional roles), our work and career, various events, incidents and experiences in our lives, and the world at large. Narrative practitioners emphasise the transformative power of storytelling. According to them, individuals and communities have the power to change the meanings they give to specific life episodes – by changing their story³⁰. In other words, the very same experiences can have entirely different meanings if they are attached to and framed by different narratives.

Chéné Swart calls this active and conscious act of reconstructing a story of an individual, community or organisation “re-authoring” the story. According to Swart, many of the dominant stories in our own lives and in our societies are problem-focused, but it is possible to rewrite them and replace them with alternative narratives³¹. Also, the concept of “counter-narrative” has been em-

²⁷ Ibarra Insead, Barbulescu 2010, p. 135; see also Scillio 2017, pp. 224-225.

²⁸ Hänninen 1996; Hänninen 2000, pp. 53-57.

²⁹ E.g., Fortunado, Canoy 2021; Jama *et al.* 2021; Kelchtermans 1993; Scillio 2017.

³⁰ E.g., Stone 2005; Swart 2013.

³¹ Swart 2013, pp. 2-7.

ployed, especially when focusing on the power relations of different narratives and attempts to challenge dominant narratives or “master narratives”³².

Narrative approaches have been regarded as a promising alternative to more traditional forms of career guidance and counselling. Narrative career interventions are founded on the career construction approach, which focuses on meaning-making related to work and the active role of individuals in designing and constructing their life and career³³.

According to studies, narrative career counselling approaches support personal and professional reflection and identity work³⁴, and they have a potential to facilitate positive transformations in a person’s life: to increase career adaptability; future orientation and agency over one’s life and career³⁵, to transform one’s career story to a more positive and optimistic one³⁶, and to develop self-awareness, self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy³⁷.

Methods and tools of narrative career counselling presented in research articles include, for example, expressive and reflective writing³⁸, poetry reading and writing³⁹, using My Career Story workbook⁴⁰ and Pictorial Narratives⁴¹, and techniques of therapeutic conversation aimed at replacing a problem-saturated story with a preferred story⁴². Narrative approaches have been applied in individual and group counselling settings and some initiatives have used a mixture of the two⁴³.

In the context of career guidance and counselling, the “career story” is an essential concept. Following Mark Scillios’ line of thought, career can be understood as a subjective experience of an individual; as «a personal narrative about work life, connecting the present to the past, and to how people imagine themselves in the future»⁴⁴. Career story has a key role in creating a sense of coherence and unity in one’s working life experiences, in constituting a person’s work identity and professional identity and in articulating and communicating the identity (or rather multiple identities) to others⁴⁵.

Moreover, career story may play an important role in creating a sense of

³² See e.g., Hansen 2018.

³³ Hartung, Santilli 2018, pp. 309-310; Savickas 2013.

³⁴ McMahon, Watson 2013, pp. 279, 283; Savickas *et al.* 2009, pp. 245-246.

³⁵ Santilli *et al.* 2019.

³⁶ Meijers, Lengelle 2012.

³⁷ Drosos *et al.* 2021, pp. 42-44.

³⁸ Meijers, Lengelle 2012.

³⁹ Wafula 2020.

⁴⁰ Santilli *et al.* 2019; Taylor, Savickas 2016.

⁴¹ Taylor, Savickas 2016.

⁴² Shefer 2018; see also Drosos *et al.* 2021.

⁴³ See e.g., Drosos *et al.* 2021; Shefer 2018, pp. 115-116; Taylor, Savickas 2016; Wafula 2020.

⁴⁴ Scillio 2017, p. 3, see also pp. 14, 213.

⁴⁵ Scillio 2017, pp. 3, 14, 213, 222.

“career security”. Scillio draws on Anthony Giddens’ idea of the link between a person’s autobiographical narrative and ontological security, and sees this subjective sense of security related to work and career (i.e. career security) as one function of a “good” career story. Even though stable job and income are, unsurprisingly, sources of security, there are also other – social and symbolical – factors. According to Scillio’s study, a career story needs to include a vision of a desired goal and a feeling of moving towards that destination to enhance a sense of career security⁴⁶.

Career story, in a broad sense, can refer to any oral, written or otherwise communicated accounts of our working life experiences, work roles and professional identities⁴⁷. The concept of a career story can, however, also be used in a more specific sense, referring to intentionally constructed narratives of one’s career and to facilitated activities through which these are created. Usually, in the context of career counselling, career stories have been constructed in oral interaction and dialogue with a counsellor or as written narratives⁴⁸. Digital Storytelling – as a multimodal genre – provides an effective, expressive and emotionally appealing alternative for reflecting on and communicating about one’s work, identity and career.

4. *Origins and uses of the Digital Storytelling practice*

Digital Storytelling is a participatory, group and workshop-based practice that was originally developed by Joe Lambert, the late Dana Atchley and their partners, who established the Center for Digital Storytelling in 1994 in Berkeley, California. The centre – which changed its name to StoryCenter in 2015 – has had a key role in spreading the practice of Digital Storytelling around the world⁴⁹.

A digital story is a short video which combines still images (sometimes also video clips) with a recorded voice-over narration and possible other media elements⁵⁰. Digital stories are typically based on the personal life experiences of the storyteller and told as first-person narratives. In other words, they are self-narratives told by using digital media tools. Multimodality of digital stories – i.e. they combine many modes of expression – separates them from more traditional forms of oral and written storytelling and makes them powerful

⁴⁶ Scillio 2017, pp. 211, 215-217.

⁴⁷ See Scillio 2017.

⁴⁸ See e.g., Meijers, Lengelle 2012.

⁴⁹ See Hartley, McWilliam 2009a, pp. 3-4; Lambert 2009, pp. 1-10.

⁵⁰ For more details, see the DICO Toolkit chapter on organising a Digital Storytelling workshop (Juppi 2023).

means of reflection and communication⁵¹. The practice of Digital Storytelling itself is interdisciplinary in nature, as it combines approaches from community theatre and drama to creative writing, photography, and film and video production⁵².

The classic model of Digital Storytelling is based on facilitated workshops, which typically last for three days⁵³. Accessible digital media tools – mobile devices or computers with video editing applications – are used to create digital stories. Rather than digital media technology, however, at the heart of the practice is the art of storytelling⁵⁴. Another key element in Digital Storytelling workshops is the group process during which the story ideas are shared and developed – the “Story Circle”, as the pioneers of the practice call it⁵⁵. Support received from the workshop group and the atmosphere of mutual trust are an important part of the workshop experience for most participants⁵⁶. This is something that is also very evident in the feedback we have received from the participants in our Digital Storytelling workshops focused on career stories.

At the end of a Digital Storytelling workshop, digital stories are shared with other workshop participants and in some cases also published online or presented to a specific target audience. Sharing finished stories allows the participants to become heard and seen, and provides an opportunity to learn from and identify with other participants’ stories. However, different participants may expect different things of a Digital Storytelling workshop and value different parts of the experience: for some, creating a digital story is a personal and private experience and presenting their story to others is not essential, whereas others see their story as a tool for communicating and connecting with other people and from the beginning, they create their story for an audience⁵⁷.

Digital Storytelling has many applications ranging from personal and professional reflection to educational use and community development. It has been used in various projects around the world and by different types of institutions, such as museums, libraries, media organisations, and health care organisations⁵⁸. At educational institutions, Digital Storytelling has been used for building various skills. According to studies, Digital Storytelling develops multiple literacies – such as media literacy, visual literacy and digital literacy – storytelling skills, communication skills, collaborative skills, and skills

⁵¹ E.g., Erstad, Silseth 2008, pp. 215-216; Hull, Nelson 2005; Lundby 2008b, p. 2.

⁵² Hardy *et al.* 2017, xiv.

⁵³ See Lambert, Hessler 2018, pp. 71-85.

⁵⁴ Hartley, McWilliam 2009a, p. 3; Lundby 2008b, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Hardy *et al.* 2017, xv; Hessler, Lambert 2017, pp. 20, 23-30; Lambert, Hessler 2018, pp. 78-80.

⁵⁶ E.g., Meadows, Kidd 2009, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁷ Thumim 2008, pp. 89-91.

⁵⁸ See e.g., Hill 2010; Lambert 2009, pp. 91-104; Lowenthal 2009; McWilliam 2009; Patient Voices 2004.

in conceptual and critical thinking⁵⁹. Especially in higher education institutions, Digital Storytelling has been used for enhancing critical thinking and reflection, transformative learning, and professional identity work⁶⁰. Digital Storytelling has been also applied to support students' career planning and to enhance their employability⁶¹.

5. *Career story as a sense-maker and identity-builder*

Creating digital career stories can serve purposes of identity and career construction at different levels of education – in secondary, vocational and higher education – and at different phases of an education cycle, especially at the critical transition phases of starting or finishing studies at a certain level, graduating and entering the working life. Students create their digital career stories in a facilitated Digital Storytelling workshop, and facilitators of the workshop can guide students to contemplate themes that are topical to them at that particular phase of studies⁶².

At the Turku University of Applied Sciences, we have so far organised 15 Digital Storytelling workshops for students of different master's programmes in arts and culture, and also several workshops for bachelor's degree students⁶³. In case of master's students, the number of students in one workshop has varied from less than 20 to nearly 40 students⁶⁴. I have explained the structure and process of our 2-day workshop in another chapter in this DICO toolkit⁶⁵.

Workshops for MA students have taken place in the very beginning of their studies. Since all master's students in Finnish universities of applied sciences have already some work experience in their field⁶⁶ – some of them in extensive

⁵⁹ E.g., Czarnecki 2009; Gregory, Steelman 2008; Li 2007; Malita 2010a; Niemi *et al.* 2014; Robin 2008.

⁶⁰ E.g., Barret 2006; Jenkins, Lonsdale 2007; Thornburg 2011, 2017.

⁶¹ See e.g., Malita 2010b.

⁶² For more details on the practical implementation of the workshop, see my other chapter in this issue (Juppi 2023).

⁶³ "We" here refers to myself and my colleague Ilona Tanskanen, who describes the practices of creative writing used in the Digital Storytelling workshops and in the related professional autobiographical process in her chapters in this issue (Tanskanen 2023a, 2023b).

⁶⁴ Yearly intake for many of our arts and culture programmes is 20 students. Some workshops have been organised for one study group only (with max. 20 participants), some for two study groups who have had some joint courses. Some students are usually unable to participate in the workshop, and complete the career story assignment independently. For these reasons the number of participants in one workshop varies.

⁶⁵ Juppi 2023.

⁶⁶ Unlike in science universities in which students usually continue to do their master's studies directly after completing bachelor's studies, in universities of applied sciences they are

careers – the focus of career stories has been primarily on reflecting on the students' careers so far and their professional identity in the present moment. Career stories of master's students are usually also somewhat future oriented and bring out the professional goals of the students. In essence, students' career stories answer the questions “who am I (as a professional/in my work role)?”, “how did I become who I am today?” and “where do I want to go and who do I want to be?”.

Even though we have not measured the objective impacts of the workshops on students, we have systematically collected qualitative feedback from students, using Google Jamboard as a platform for anonymous feedback. Therefore, we have a good understanding of how our students perceive the digital career story activity and its impacts on themselves. The purpose of this chapter is not to engage in any systematic and rigorous scientific analyses of the feedback. I will, however, use some quotations from the feedback as anecdotal evidence to illustrate students' experiences and perceived impacts⁶⁷.

There are, naturally, differences between the experiences and views of individual students, but same themes keep recurring in the feedback of different student groups. Based on the feedback, our observations as workshop facilitators, and the literature review, it is safe to say that Digital Storytelling benefits students at least in the following ways:

Sense of coherence: Narrating one's career story – no matter how fragmented the career may be – may help to see connections and causal relationships between isolated events and episodes; to understand reasons and motivations behind the choices made over the years; to see the importance and meaning of specific moments, events, people or places in one's life. Coherence and unity may not be as evident in all the digital career stories, though. Students are given a lot of creative freedom, so all career stories do not follow classic story structures or form narratives in a strict sense; the text of a career story can in some cases be written in poetic form or as stream of consciousness, for instance, rather than as a chronological and causal sequence of events. In either case, writing the story – no matter which form it takes – provides an opportunity to make sense of the experiences related to one's work and career; to explore meanings of various experiences and the career as a whole.

I really liked the concept of reflecting on where our career story really started and looking at how the path changed over time.

expected to have a minimum of two years of work experience after the completion of the bachelor's degree to be eligible to apply.

⁶⁷ Quotes are from the feedback collected from workshops organised during the DICO project in 2022. Some of the feedback is originally in English, some has been written in Finnish and translated in English by the author of this chapter.

To notice once more that I have been to quite many different roles but still that there is a connection between them.

Able to see the connection throughout my career path to discover the core values, reflect on what I have done, what I am doing right now, and what my future could lead to.

Self-awareness and self-understanding: Self-reflection is a key element in the process of Digital Storytelling and thereby the practice enhances the self-awareness and self-understanding of students. This is of course related to their professional identity, as they get to see their professional values, motivations, strengths, goals and so on more clearly.

It was great to reflect on my career and try to find my core identity.

I feel enlightened. My digital story gave me a tangible picture of what kind of elements and pieces my personal history is composed of.

It was great to get to know myself again. To remember where it all started and how I came here. What do I want from the future, is it clear to me?

Deep reflection on where I've come from and all the things that have affected my career. What a great start for this degree programme!

Agency: Creating one's career story can also support students' agency. In their career stories, students are the protagonists that make active choices, set professional and other life goals, overcome obstacles, and follow their dreams. Making this visible and tangible in a digital story can bring a sense of control over one's life and career. Moreover, seeing stories of other students, can be an inspiring and encouraging experience, and these models provided by others can further strengthen participants' belief in their possibility to achieve their goals in spite of obstacles.

To understand that there is actually a reason behind the choices made in the past, a bigger goal in future.

Being able to share that "a career" isn't linear – it has its difficulties and successes – and hopefully plenty of eureka moments :)

I loved to share a story with ups and downs, because that is what life is.

Professional self-esteem: In their digital career stories, students get to present their work history, skills, strengths, and – in case of artists and other creative workers – art works or other creative works. This is done in verbal narration as well as through photographs, and in some cases also through music. In addition, the digital story itself, as a creative product, is a demonstration of a student's creativity. Making their accomplishments, skills and strengths visible in the story, also helps the students themselves to recognise and value their own professional competence.

Realising I'm pretty amazing... and so are all the people in this group! What a bunch of super creatives!!!

I have accomplished a lot...

To go back and see what I have accomplished and realise I should be more proud of it than I am now.

I feel confident – this experience gave me courage.

Group identity and peer support: Sharing one's career story to other students in the group and seeing the career stories of others gives an opportunity to get to know fellow students on a more intimate level than ordinary introductions would allow. Even though career stories focus on the professional life of students, they are often highly personal. Daring to be vulnerable in front of the group, being heard and seen through one's story, having one's experiences validated, and receiving support and compassion from the group can be a liberating and empowering experience. Seeing career stories one can identify and empathise with brings the group members closer to each other. This creates feelings of belonging and thus facilitates the creation of a collective identity in the group.

It was also really great to share the stories with the class and feel more connected with each other.

It was amazing to get accepted and receive feeling of belonging.

Very inspired and relieved that there are so many like-minded people here, with such similar stories.

I got to see myself through the eyes of others. I am sure that sharing these personal stories made us a tighter group.

To see how different everyone's paths are but still all so beautiful and full of meaning.

6. Conclusions

Creating a digital career story in a facilitated workshop and sharing it with the study group is a meaningful and useful activity for students. It is a collective and dialogical process of meaning-making and sense-making. A digital career story represents a student as a professional in their field, bringing out their work history, competences, strengths, goals and passions. A career story thus plays a role in constructing and communicating their professional identity and career.

Elaborating their career story in a digital story can help students to tell their story also in other situations of informal and formal social interactions, such as in professional events, job interviews or journalistic interviews. Paul Hartung and Sara Santilli refer to this ability as narratability and see it as one of the key goals of career construction counselling, along with intentionality and career adaptability. According to their definition, narratability is the capacity to «tell one's own life story clearly and coherently and say who one is and who one is becoming»⁶⁸.

Being able to construct and narrate a coherent career story, in which a student sees themselves as an active actor (protagonist of the story), who makes choices, overcomes obstacles and strives for personally meaningful goals, is an encouraging, empowering and (according to the students' feedback) sometimes even therapeutic experience. Especially in the era of fragmented and precarious work and portfolio careers, educational institutions should pay increasing attention on how to facilitate students' career (story) construction. Digital Storytelling provides one option worth exploring.

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