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## **Connecting generations in time of crisis: love stories from another time.**

### **From oral to digital storytelling**

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### **Summary**

*In 2012 the EU Lifelong Learning Programme suggested that the civic and social associations should take action in order to raise awareness and to educate citizens on active ageing and intergenerational solidarity. Nine associations from eight different countries decided to co-operate and created a two-year Grundtvig learning partnership working together on "Connecting Generations" in an effort to find the appropriate, concrete and measurable tools to meet the challenges of active ageing.*

*As part of this programme, students, grandfathers and grandmothers co-created a digital book about love stories which come from another era. Students listened to their grandparents' love stories and recorded these narratives into digital formats thus transforming traditional storytelling into digital story telling. This article attempts to present a theoretical background concerning storytelling and digital storytelling, but also the methodology used to plan, apply and evaluate a teaching / learning process on connecting generations.*

Keywords: connecting generations, love stories, storytelling, digital storytelling

### **Introduction**

Storytelling is part of people's lives, evidence of storytelling can be found in the history of every nation and civilisation (Barthes, 1977 as cited in Meliadou, Nakou, Gouskos & Meimaris, 2011). According to Roland Barthes (1981 as

cited in Meimaris, 2013) there is not and there will be no society without storytelling. There are various kinds of storytelling, like a simple message just for fun, information related to attitudes, beliefs, ethics, rules and norms. They work as a means of meaning making and meaning transmitting; interpreting and understanding the world; being connected to the world (Meliadou et al, 2011). Storytelling has been a means of communication, a teaching tool connecting generations and transmitting messages in different civilizations, in different eras (Mello, 2001 as cited in Meliadou et al, 2011).

Narration is defined as a sequence of events, events sometimes deliberately set in motion by the heroes that change the way things are at the beginning of the story. It is obvious that narration is an “art” manipulating time (Politis, 2006). It is a cultural process that characterizes each culture. In today’s world, narratives surround us, in the movies, theatre, advertisements, TV, social media, websites, blogs, apps, e-books... As the digital world has evolved so to has story telling for the digital medium. We have evolved into a digital world and storytelling goes through every product in the media and the digital civilization (Bordwell, Thompson, 2009 as cited in Meliadou et al, 2011).

As Meimaris (2013) comments storytelling promotes the knowledge and the wisdom transmission through time. It is a global mass medium that connects different civilizations, but also generations, carrying values, traditions and social practices. Hamilton & Weiss (2007) also note that

*«Storytelling is the oldest form of education. Cultures have always told tales as a way of passing down beliefs, traditions, and history to future generations. Stories are at the core of all that makes us human».*

The diachronic presence of storytelling in our lives today has been facilitated in the easy access and use of digital cameras, video recorders, cell phones, tablets, the internet, wifi--giving us another way to tell a story in a digital era (Meimaris, 2013).

## **Storytelling in education**

The exploitation of storytelling in education, having as a starting point any kind of stimuli or the teacher’s initiative can offer multiple learning benefits; this type of activity can contribute in the growth of a team and a collaborative culture in a classroom; it helps to cultivate oral and written speech; develop skills related to investigation, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, making decisions and experiencing consequences in an active, participatory way. Robin (2008: 224) recapitulates the gains from digital storytelling in referring to digital literacy, global literacy, technology literacy, visual literacy and information literacy.

Telling stories is another way for the children to actively produce their own understanding of the world around them (Cassel, Ananny, Basu, Bickmore, Chong, Mellis, Ryokai, Smith, Vilhalmsson, Yan, 2000).

Digital storytelling has been used as a means to use the ICTs in order to facilitate the innovative narrative forms as it increases interest, attention and motivation for students. As Burgess (2006: 206) comments “Digital Storytelling

as a 'movement' is explicitly designed to amplify the ordinary voice". The ordinary through digital storytelling may become extraordinary. Besides storytelling may motivate students to use a seductive for them tool in a profitable way, transforming the tool in innovative ways of expression in alternative contexts (Kulla-Abbott & Polman, 2008).

### **Connecting Generations in the time of crisis**

Communication among generations in the era of digitalization is influenced and differentiated. Grandparents' experiences seem to be very far away from youngsters, who speak in terms of "like" and "click to play". Diversity and distance among generations today more than ever look like "an inextricable puzzle" (Antonaros, Esposito, Manousou, Moutsouroufi, Moutzuris, Papaionnou, Portell & Tanaini, 2013). *In that way "Discimus vitae" (we learn about life) as Senekas supports and moreover connect children to culture constructing meaning (Bruner, 1990). Especially, Bruner note:*

*"The symbolic systems that individuals used in constructing meaning were systems that were already in place, already "there" deeply entrenched in culture an language. They constituted a very special kind of communal tool kit whose tools, once used, made the user a reflection of the community"*

In this context, in 2012 a Grundtvig program with the title «Connecting Generations» began. This learning partnership is the result of a collective collaborative project started in Italy, and was further developed, building on common interests and visions, and finally translated into practices in order to develop strategies for lifelong learning and mobility and co-construction of knowledge and lessons learnt consistent with the Grundtvig priority of intergenerational learning and learning for senior citizens.

While demographic transformation in our society is already a fact, our adult education organisations still lag behind in offering innovative paths for learning that can contribute to create better understanding among generations. It is considered that ICTs are a main challenge to face: elder people can greatly benefit from becoming more familiar with social networks and technology, acquiring a codified language to interact with young people. On the other hand, young people, through interaction with elders based on respect and active listening, will open their view and minds to non-technological aspects of human interaction and communication.

### **Digital love stories from another era**

In effort to categorize some stories that could be told using technology, Lambert (2010: 7) refers to love stories commenting that "we constantly test other people's experiences in these fundamental relationships to affirm our own". Recording love stories from another era has been part of this program. Pupils at the age of 11 and 12, attending the fifth and sixth grade of two primary schools in Athens (the 6<sup>th</sup> Primary School in Saint Dimitrios - four classes – and the 101<sup>st</sup> Primary School in Athens – two classes) and another one in a Greek

province (Primary School in Ermioni) participated in the project. Using the theme “Love Stories”, 137 graders engaged in dialogue with their grandparents, and then narrated and recorded these stories digitally. The project was set up in 2012, but the implementation started in November 2013 and it is planned to end on April 2014. The methodology is roughly described below:

**Aim:** pupils of the fifth and sixth grade interview and record details and descriptions related to their grandfathers’ and their grandmothers’ biography. These narrations create not only a common connection between two generations but also an opportunity for the children to get a better understanding of who they are, where they came from and what life was like in an historical sense in past generations.

**Indicative targets:** the pupils should be able to:

- describe the story that brought their grandparents together and how they celebrated their wedding,
- record their grandfathers’ and grandmothers’ jobs and reference this to the historical-social-cultural situation of that era,
- familiarize themselves with the interview process,
- connect to their grandfathers and their grandmothers through the narration of their lives’ events,
- develop empathy for others’ feelings,
- inquire narrative writing through the use of digital storytelling as an expressive medium,
- choose medium/media to record and narrate these stories digitally by themselves,
- create a digital book based on the gathered material,
- collate all the materials gathered, to produce a digital eBook to be present with honor to their grandparents.

**Methodology:**

It is a project that follows the methodology of action-research. The students showed their interest for the subject that combined their family history to the local history.

In the context of the programme “Connecting Generations: love stories from another era” a flexible schedule was planned (Robson, 2007), which took place in circular and repetitive steps that summarized in the following 11 stages:

Stage 1: The students read a book called “The storyteller grandfather”. They had the experience of listening to an audio book read by actors and they were engaged in a series of activities related to the book like

- writing answers to some questions,
- tracking information about the historical – social context described in the book,
- drawing scenes but also their own cover for the text,
- creating mind maps showing the protagonists but also their actions,
- watching parts of a TV series based on the book,

- conducting an interview with an actor that had the role of the grandfather in the TV transportation.

This book worked as a pretext for the project to come.

Stage 2: There was a discussion about the aim of the programme, the events, what the students had to do, some requirements. The students' parents were also informed.

Stage 3: The students interviewed their grandparents using voice-recorders or just keeping notes. They also collected photos.

Stage 4: The love stories were written.

Stage 5: All the stories were read in the classroom, the students made comments in an effort for some quality criteria to emerge. In some cases the pupils made some amelioration adding certain missing elements like dates, places, occupation.

Stage 6: The stories were recorded digitally.

Stage 7: The students chose two or three stories in each class in order to transform them into an e-book. Selection was made using criteria which included: the quality of narrative speech; the existence of historical, social connections; plot; dialogue.

Stage 8: Students produced their digital stories using tools like Audacity and Movie maker.

Stage 9: The stories are being collated into a collective digital book using software called SkyReader. SkyReader is a cross-platform, online, self publishing software that allows for multimedia. Books can be exported as .mobi, .epub, .pdf and SkyReaders own format which can be downloaded for free and lets readers experience the multimedia aspects of a digital book. The multi formats also books to be read and shared across the board of digital devices available today. The multimedia aspect of the digital book can only be enjoyed in SkyReader and .epub 3 on Kindle Fire presently. SkyReader does not use programming language, it is based on simple actions that allows the children to follow the process and add their input in putting the ebook together.

Stage 10: A presentation of the e-books is arranged with the students of both schools in Athens' participation using teleconference. E-books will also be presented to students' families and friends. Grandparents will be honored and thanked for their contribution in the project and most of all for their affection.

Stage 11: Evaluation and reflection on the process and the material gathered and produced are also planned, formative during the implementation of the project, having as its focus the students' comments and feedback, but also summative at the end of the project to assess the overall experience.

## **Results**

The outcome of the children's work will be presented in stages as they were evolved in the project.

The first interviews that the pupils took were an early literature work without social-historical-economical-cultural elements. In their very first stories, the students described how their grandfather met their grandmother without mentioning the place, the time, their age, their occupation or the dialogues that were later discussed in the classroom.

The stories were read by the pupils and, then, their peers and the teachers made comments. The children themselves agreed to make ameliorations by adding the missing information. This process was repeated several times and

Γνωστός γάμος  
της γιαγιάς μου με  
τον παππού μου.

Μία μέσημέρα του καλοκαιριού, ο παππούς μου, που ήταν πολύ γερός, ήθελε να πάει στην εκκλησία να προσεύχεται για την υγεία του.

Όταν η γιαγιά μου έμαθε τον λόγο, πήγε στο κτίριο της εκκλησίας και μπήκε στον ναό, αλλά εκεί της είπαν να μην μπει γιατί εκεί είναι μόνο για τους άντρες. Τότε της είπαν να περιμένει στον χώρο των γυναικών, αλλά εκεί της είπαν να μην μπει γιατί εκεί είναι μόνο για τους νεότερους.

Όταν η γιαγιά μου έμαθε ότι ο παππούς της ήθελε να πάει στην εκκλησία, της είπαν να μην μπει εκεί γιατί είναι μόνο για τους άντρες. Τότε της είπαν να περιμένει στον χώρο των γυναικών, αλλά εκεί της είπαν να μην μπει γιατί είναι μόνο για τους νεότερους.

Τότε η γιαγιά μου πήγε στον χώρο των γυναικών, αλλά εκεί της είπαν να μην μπει γιατί είναι μόνο για τους νεότερους. Τότε η γιαγιά μου περίμενε εκεί μέχρι που ο παππούς της ήρθε και της είπε να πάει μαζί του στην εκκλησία. Τότε η γιαγιά μου πήγε με τον παππού της στην εκκλησία και εκεί τους έβλεπαν οι άλλοι.

Το γάμο τους τον έκανε ο παππούς μου, ο οποίος εκείνη την εποχή ήταν πολύ γερός. Ο γάμος τους έγινε με πολύ εορτασμό και πολλούς καλεσμένους.

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— Παιδί μου;

- Έτσι μου είπαν να βρω με τα φίλα μου αδέρφια η γιαγιά μου η προγιαγιά μου τις είχε συστήσει.

- Δεν έπρεπε να πεις πουθενά, θα έπρεπε να σου έλεγα.

- Φοβόμουν να μη σε γκαρδάρω!

- Δεν έπρεπε να πεις πουθενά!!!

Η γιαγιά μου αρχικά ήθελε να κάτσει σπίτι και να μην έρθει στην εκκλησία, αλλά η προγιαγιά μου να συνέλθει και του παππού.

- Καλώς το νυμφίο μου, καλώς τον θάλαμο μου!

Μετά, μετά τους αρραβώνες, συνέληξαν στη γιαγιά τους η οποία τους παραδέχτηκε στον μπιτόνι της προγιαγιάς, και εκεί ο αρραβώνας της γιαγιάς μου έγινε με τον παππού και με την προγιαγιά.

Ή έτσι έγινε η γνωριμία του παππού και της γιαγιάς μου.

Ένα χρόνο μετά τον γάμο τους, έμασαν τον παππού μου να πεθάνει από 4 χρόνια έμασαν τον παππού μου.

The end

Χριστίνα Παπαδοπούλου 2020



My mother's father had decided to leave the country to find for himself a better life. She was leaving all her relatives behind. She was the eldest of her sister, Angela, who had to go and looked after the place when she came all the time. A man, who was working as a flight attendant for Olympic Airways, tried to convince her and encouraged her to write a letter to her family promising to himself, would deliver it.

In his day, the man to her place, introduced himself and explained the reason for his visit. After a light talk with my grandmother, the man promised to go back to her and talk about the man and her home etc.

She lived in Canada. Before he left, they had arranged their next meeting, which was meant to be very important for both the man and my mother.

On the day of the appointment, still my mother had arranged to meet her Grandfather but was unable to stay home to meet the man who would bring news from her home.

It was late at five light and lived happily ever after.

My grandmother told me that when she was a child, she had a very special meeting. One day, she was sitting on the porch and a man came to her door. He was tall and handsome and he was wearing a suit. He told her that he was a pilot and that he was working for Olympic Airways. He said that he was going to Canada and that he would be back in a few weeks. He asked her if she would like to write a letter to her family and he would deliver it for her. She agreed and he took the letter and went away.

She never met the man but she knew he was real because she had heard from her family that he had come to Canada. She was very happy and she knew that her mother was safe and happy. She was the eldest of her sister, Angela, who had to go and look after the place when she came all the time.

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You have nowhere to go, the man will come!  
You invited him, not me!  
But he nowhere to go!!!  
My grandmother made to sit home and in 10' the door was knocking! My grandfather went to open the door and he said to grandfather:  
- Welcome Dad, welcome my son!  
He got in, he introduced himself to my grandmother who was totally fascinated by his charm (he was the pilot) and how it traveled on the airplane. He left the same way as he came.  
That was the meeting of my grandmother and my grandfather.  
A year later they married, they had my dad and four brothers later they had to my uncle.



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the children improved their stories. Having read all the stories time and again, they chose the best stories in order to record their narration and translate them into English.

Figure 1: Children's work (manuscripts, pictures)

### **ΓΙΑ ΝΑ ΓΝΩΡΙΣΟΥΜΕ ΚΑΛΥΤΕΡΑ ΤΗΝ ΓΙΑΓΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΝ ΠΑΠΠΟΥ ΜΟΥ...**

Ο παππούς μου λέγεται **Ευστράτιος Φ.** και είναι συνταξιούχος δάσκαλος.

Γεννήθηκε στη Αλεξανδρούπολη, όπου και σπούδασε στην Παιδαγωγική Ακαδημία.

Είχε 2 αδελφές (Ελένη και Κούλα) κι έναν αδελφό, τον Γιάννη. Οι γονείς του ονομάζονταν Γιώργος Φ. και Δέσποινα Χ. Ο πατέρας του ήταν κουρέας και ήθελε να τον κάνει κι αυτόν. Αλλά ήταν πολύ καλός μαθητής και έτσι τον άφησε να σπουδάσει!

Τα αδέρφια του παππού ζουν όλα στην Αλεξανδρούπολη, αλλά εκείνος ήρθε στην Αθήνα, γιατί οι ευκαιρίες για δουλειά ήταν περισσότερες. Στην αρχή δούλεψε σε Ιδιωτικά Σχολεία και το 1978 διορίστηκε στο Δημόσιο Σχολείο. Σπούδασε επίσης στη Μαράσλειο Παιδαγωγική Ακαδημία με ειδίκευση: Ειδική Αγωγή και στο Πάντειο Πανεπιστήμιο. Είχε πολλά χρόνια την Ειδική Τάξη στο σχολείο που δούλεψε, ώσπου έγινε Διευθυντής στο 1<sup>ο</sup> Αλίμου, στο οποίο έμεινε μέχρι να συνταξιοδοτηθεί.

Η γιαγιά μου είναι η **Ελευθερία Θ.** και είναι συνταξιούχος οδηγός σχολικού λεωφορείου. Γεννήθηκε στο Μοσχάτο και έχει 2 αδελφές ακόμα (την Φωτεινή και την Βαρβάρα). Οι γονείς της ονομάζονταν Εμμανουήλ Θεοχάρης και Καλλιόπη Μπαρίτου. Ο πατέρας της ήταν έμπορος στον Πειραιά και μετακόμισαν στο Παλαιό Φάληρο όταν τα κορίτσια ήταν μικρά. Άρχισε να δουλεύει κοντά στον παππού μου ως συνοδός κι αργότερα ως οδηγός σε μικρό σχολικό λεωφορείο. Αργότερα, όταν ο παππούς διορίστηκε σε Δημόσιο Σχολείο, εκείνη συνέχισε να συνεργάζεται με ιδιωτικά νηπιαγωγεία μέχρι που συνταξιοδοτήθηκε.

Σήμερα ζουν στο Παλαιό Φάληρο, μας επισκέπτονται συχνά και μας τηλεφωνούν καθημερινά. Είμαι υπερήφανη για τους προγόνους μου. Είναι οι καλύτεροι για μένα και είναι κοντά μου σε όλες μου τις στιγμές.

### **Στράτος Φ. –Ελευθερία Θ.**

Το 1964, όταν ο παππούς μου απολύθηκε από το στρατό, διορίστηκε δάσκαλος σε ένα ιδιωτικό σχολείο στο Παλαιό Φάληρο. Εκεί, ήταν μαθήτρια στην τελευταία τάξη του σημερινού Λυκείου, που λεγόταν 7<sup>η</sup> Γυμνασίου, η 17χρονη γιαγιά μου.

Ο έρωτάς τους ήταν κεραυνοβόλος, αφού μόλις αντίκρισε ο παππούς τη γιαγιά μου στο σχολείο με την, τότε, ποδιά, την ερωτεύτηκε αμέσως! Αργότερα, ξεκίνησε να της στέλνει γράμματα και ραβασάκια. Αυτό γινόταν γιατί δεν μπορούσαν ούτε στο σχολείο να μιλήσουν, ούτε επιτρεπόταν στη γιαγιά μου να βγει από το σπίτι.

Μετά από πολύ καιρό, όταν ο παππούς έμενε στη Νέα Σμύρνη και η γιαγιά μου στο Παλαιό Φάληρο, ο παππούς πήγαινε και έβλεπε τη γιαγιά μου μόνο για λίγο, επειδή εκείνη έπρεπε να είναι στο σπίτι τη στιγμή που γύριζε ο πατέρας της. Οι άνθρωποι που γνώριζαν για τη σχέση τους ήταν λίγοι: η μητέρα της γιαγιάς μου και μερικοί φίλοι του παππού μου.

Ο παππούς είχε συναντηθεί μια φορά με τη μέλλουσα πεθερά του και της είπε ότι είχε “καλό σκοπό” και ήθελε να παντρευτεί τη γιαγιά μου. Η μαμά της συμφώνησε, αλλά προβληματίστηκε για τον τρόπο που θα το μάθαινε ο πατέρας της γιαγιάς μου, ο οποίος δεν ήθελε.

Ραντεβού βγήκαν μετά από έναν χρόνο. Ο παππούς πήγαινε τη γιαγιά μου στην παραλία, σε μία καφετέρια που ονομαζόταν ΒΡ. Εκεί έπιναν το ποτό που ήταν της εποχής, δηλαδή βερμούτ, και έτρωγαν φιστίκια. Η γιαγιά μου συνήθως φορούσε ταγέρ ή φούστες. Για να μην φύγει ντυμένη από το σπίτι και πέσει κάτι στην αντίληψη του πατέρα τη, ντυνόταν και βαφόταν στο δρόμο! Επίσης η γιαγιά μου καλούσε σε πάρτι τον παππού μου, χωρίς να γνωρίζει ο πατέρας της ποιος είναι!

Τελικά, ο παππούς, τηλεφώνησε στον πατέρα της γιαγιάς μου, και μετά από συνάντηση, εκείνος δέχτηκε. Και πάλι όμως, δεν την έβλεπε συχνά. Μόνο μερικά βράδια περνούσε κάτω από το σπίτι της, αλλά δεν την άφηναν να βγει έξω.

Μέχρι να αρραβωνιαστούν, οι δυο τους έβγαιναν έξω μόνο για 30 λεπτά! Τέλος, αρραβωνιάστηκαν το 1965. Παντρεύτηκαν 12 Απριλίου του 1966, σε ηλικία 30 χρονών ο παππούς και 21 η γιαγιά μου, στην Αγία Φωτεινή Νέας Σμύρνης με καλεσμένους τους μαθητές του σχολείου! Έναν χρόνο αργότερα γεννήθηκε το πρώτο τους παιδί, ο πατέρας μου και το 1973 η θεία μου!



**My grand-parent's love**

After his military service, my grandfather, Stratos ,started working as a primary school teacher in a private school at Palaio Faliro. My 17-year-old grandmother, Eleftheria, was a high school student of the same school.

It was a love at first sight! Later, my grandfather started writing letters to my grandmother because they couldn't talk to each other at school nor go out together.

Much later, when my grandfather was living at Nea Smyrni and my grandmother at Palaio Faliro, they started seeing each other for a while because she had to be at home before her father came back. No one knew about their relationship except from my great grandmother and some of my grandfather's friends.

My grandfather had met his future mother-in-law once and he had told her that he intended to get married with her daughter. My great grandmother agreed but she didn't know how to tell her husband about it who thought that his daughter was too young to get married. Finally, my grandfather called his future father-in-law and asked him to meet him. My great grandfather accepted but, even after that, he didn't let her daughter meet my grandfather. He went outside her house to see her, but she wasn't allowed to get out of the house.

They started dating each other a year later. They met each other at the beach, in a cafeteria called BP. There, they used to drink a famous drink of that era, called vermouth and eat peanuts. My grandmother used to wear dresses or skirts. She didn't want her father to know that she was going out with my grandfather, so she got dressed and made up in the street! She also invited my grandfather at parties but her father knew nothing about it.

Until they got engaged, they met each other for only 30 minutes! They finally got engaged in 1965 and got married on 12 April 1966. My father was born a year later. They got married in Agia Fotini, at Nea Smyrni. All the school pupils were invited.

Figure 2: excerpts from the children's work



Figure 3: Pictures from the e-book

The pupils participated in the project showing great interest for the appropriate recording of their stories, the narration as well as the recording of their voices. The innovation and the diversity motivated them to participate in a school activity that created an authentic learning context with multiple effects. This project offered an experience of connecting generations as well as enhancing communication among / uniting/connecting the pupils among themselves.



Figure 4: Pictures from the studio

## Conclusions

The programme is still in progress and it is to be completed by the end of May. The implementation of the activities offers students a chance to design, create and present their own digital love stories. They increase a full complement of skills such as literacy, research, writing, organization, technological, presentation, interview, interpersonal, problem solving, and assessment. **They discovered, shared and created new cultural meanings through their families' stories**, exploit skills related to cultural and aesthetic education, but also skills needed by a mass media consumer (Burgess, 2006).

It is particularly interesting the fact that the pupils participate showing great interest, maturity, consistency and responsibility; besides the cognitive skills that they develop, they cultivate values and attitudes.

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