

2(b). Storytelling

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Storytelling has become a blanket term that could mean just about anything. This group focused its storytelling sessions on the challenges of teaching longer stories with a clear narrative (storyline) holding it together and how to do so more effectively.

They agreed that teaching storytelling is an especially difficult task due to many students' lack of basic listening, observing, interviewing, story identifying and structuring skills and a lack of time to teach them. And the fact students are reading less and less on their own does not help.

Skilled storytelling techniques not only attract audiences to stories, they help them better understand them. As Van der Ziel (2013) explains, "Humans see events most clearly when news events are organized as a narrative" (p. 2). To capture valuable themes and present them as memorable stories, "Journalistic storytelling uses literary techniques. It is about finding true stories and crafting them to give readers an experience they won't soon forget" (p. 2).

Despite a wealth of information on storytelling techniques and the importance of teaching them, -- the group agreed that storytelling elements should permeate all journalism classes -- educators often do not have the time to even scratch the surface of this topic since it requires so much in-depth training and practice.

Yet many journalism teachers still try to teach storytelling (identifying stories, finding story lines, structuring them, etc.) via a wide variety of methods and creative approaches, including Story-based Inquiry (<http://www.storybasedinquiry.com>), the Ladder of Abstraction, Photovoice (which tells stories through photography and grassroots activism), deconstruction, peer review and the use of themes, myths and archetypes. New Journalism texts also help.

Additional techniques include turning off the sound in videos and judging the students' narrative techniques by the strength of the images alone. Another is turning off the images and assessing the students' work by the strength of sound alone.

Educators should also share with their colleagues what storytelling techniques they are teaching so overlap can be scaled down and student confusion can be avoided.

Even though a massive number of approaches to storytelling are widely available, there is a serious lack of scholarly research on teaching journalism students storytelling skills. As

storytelling becomes more and more essential to the field and the teaching of journalism, more such research, worldwide, is needed.

Recommendations

After a final meeting between parallel groups, this combined syndicate group agreed on the following recommendations for colleagues worldwide:

1. Storytelling needs to be clearly defined so everyone (students, faculty, administrators, etc.) understands what exactly needs to be taught, advocated and promoted.
2. Educators should push students to embrace self-learning: to read, study and produce more out-of-classroom stories. This will expose them to more storytelling techniques and give them much need practice applying them to their own stories.
3. There needs to be much more curriculum sharing so teachers at the same institution know what their colleagues are teaching in order to increase efficiency and decrease overlap. Storytelling curriculums from other schools should also be reviewed and shared, and the next WJEC should help with such efforts.
4. A long list of storytelling resources should be gathered and shared among those who teach storytelling so its teaching is less ad-hoc.
5. More storytelling research directly related to teaching journalism students should be conducted globally and shared among colleagues worldwide. The next WJEC could help with such efforts as well.

Reference

Van der Ziel, T. (2013). *How to educate on storytelling: from follower to innovator*. Unpublished WJEC-3 background report.

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