

**Paradigms of Engagement:
Digital Storytelling as Pedagogical Strategy in Multilingual Societies**

A Thesis Summary Submitted

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SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

The thesis titled 'Paradigms of Engagement: Digital Storytelling as Pedagogical Strategy in Multilingual Societies' is an action-based study which explores the application of digital storytelling as a potential teaching-learning and interactive tool between teachers and students in the context of multilingual and multi-ethnic communities of Sikkim. The study situates the principles of digital humanities and digital pedagogy within the context of regional digital infrastructure and existing practices of classroom teaching in the various schools of Sikkim. The study was conducted across ten schools situated in different districts of the state, with the participation of over 200 students belonging to diverse ethnic communities. Following the principles of participatory action-based research, workshops were conducted to introduce digital storytelling as a teaching-learning tool for teachers and students. The core focus of the study was to utilise the practice of digital storytelling as a strategy to bolster teaching-learning activities through collaborative and multilingual interaction in classrooms of Sikkim. For the purpose of the study, students from secondary (VI-VIII) and middle stage (IX-X) were selected who were then introduced to digital stories through several exercises designed on the lessons and concepts prescribed in their syllabus. Throughout the workshop sessions, a multilingual medium of instruction was maintained to encourage as diverse interaction as possible between students, teachers and instructor.

Apart from the curriculum-based knowledge, this study also engaged with local and indigenous knowledge, encouraging students to explore their experiential and anecdotal memories. Given the rich and diverse multi-ethnic composition of Sikkim, digital storytelling was employed to record indigenous cultural traditions

through the personal narratives of students situated within their everyday interactions with members from their communities. Digital storytelling, therefore, was also explored for creating personal narratives through synthesising curricular and indigenous knowledge in a singular, shareable and storage-friendly artefact. Last but not least, the study also deals with the issue of creative development and assessment of students in school classrooms of India. Given the interactive nature of storytelling, the study utilised storytelling to enhance the creative thinking process and also as a medium of creating synthetic and creative outputs which could be effectively evaluated through academic methods of assessment.

The study is in the format of a written thesis which is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1 **Introduction** provides a historical overview of the multi-ethnic composition of Sikkim and traces the paradigms of engagement among the people of Sikkim since early times. The chapter outlines the contemporary growth and evolution of technology in the hills of Sikkim and outlines the current state of technology incorporation in the school classrooms of the state. Through a comprehensive literature review, the chapter contextualises the research problem within the broader framework of digital humanities and digital pedagogy and also within the context of regional classroom practices and infrastructure. It further discusses the action-based research methodology adopted for the study, which used workshops and group discussions as the primary modes of inquiry, supplemented by audio-visual documentation and field notes.

Chapter 2 **Digital Storytelling as a Teaching-Learning Tool** situates the medium of digital stories within the classrooms of government schools in Sikkim. The

chapter focuses on integrating digital stories with the curricular exercises of students. The chapter situates digital storytelling within the theoretical framework of digital pedagogy and tests this tool in the classrooms through the method of workshop-based exercises designed on the basis of academic lessons prescribed in the textbooks for students of government schools. The chapter documents in detail the designing of exercises and the interaction between students, teachers and instructors during workshop sessions. Student-created digital stories as part of these workshops have been discussed at the end of the chapter, which documents students' engagement and participation process with the learning material and presents an analysis of their final output.

Chapter 3 Digital Storytelling as an Archival Tool for the Preservation of Language and Culture explores the application of digital stories in the creation of personal archives as part of curriculum learning in schools of Sikkim. This chapter provides a general overview of archiving in the North-eastern region of India with a particular focus on Sikkim. It further situates the practice of personal archiving within the broader framework of archiving and curation studies and examines how personal archives can supplement the existing institutional archives through including everyday narratives of interaction. The chapter argues that creation of personal archives through digital stories within the setup of classroom learning will foster cultural literacy among teachers and students and also provide the required instructional rigour for checking the veracity and reliability of digital stories. It concludes with the analysis of student-created digital stories with respect to student participation and content of personal archives.

Chapter 4 **Digital Storytelling as a Tool for Nurturing Creativity** employs the medium of digital stories for developing and assessing creative aptitude of students within a prescribed curricular design. The chapter situates digital storytelling both as a ‘creative process’ and a ‘creative artefact.’ It provides an overview of creativity theories and models based on which it formulates an assessment model for evaluating creativity during workshops conducted as part of this study. Digital storytelling exercises with students have been analysed both with respect to creative participation and creative output of students. The chapter further gives insights into how regular academic exercises and questions can be reframed in order to adapt to the medium of digital storytelling for the purpose of creative nurturing.

Chapter 5 **Conclusion** summarises the thesis and the key arguments therein and discusses the findings of the studies as well as the limitations faced during its course. It further elaborates the scope and future implications of the study. Through this research, the study hopes to highlight the emerging trends of engaging with digital technology and how can it be utilised for the purpose of education. Contemporary studies in digital pedagogy have outlined various advantages of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integration in classrooms. However, for effective integration, it is vital to gather a situated understanding of technology within the context of region-specific socio-cultural perception and policies. This helps in ascertaining the appropriate strategies for technological integration in schools attuned to the sensibilities and skillsets of diverse groups of students. In this regard, the study hopes to contribute to the local policies and practices on the integration of technology within school classrooms of Sikkim. Furthermore, the study expects to blur the boundaries between methods of formal and

informal learning by encouraging multilingual interaction and culturally inclusive participation of students and teachers via the practice of digital storytelling.