“IT’S KIND OF A COLLEGE THING”
USING STORYTELLING TO DEVELOP BOYS’ UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF CHRIST’S COLLEGE
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Introduction

Christ’s College is one of the oldest boys school in New Zealand, established in 1850, as part of the early settlement of the city of Christchurch. The school boasts a long and varied history, and as such, has many stories to tell. Not only are the stories important to the history of the school, but also to the development of the young men who pass through its gates. The retelling of these stories, both fact and myth, through the use of modern technology such as virtual reality, provided an opportunity to instil in the boys the importance that the history of the school plays in the past, present and the future of the College. Listening to stories and recreating them in class provided boys with the opportunity to develop their understanding.

Research Context and Participants

As an Anglican faith-based school, Christ’s College caters to boys aged between twelve and eighteen years, for the duration of their five years in the New Zealand secondary education system. Located in Christchurch, the College’s motto of “bene tradita, bene servanda” translates to “good traditions, well maintained” and lends itself to the rich history that underpins the ethos of the school. The participants of this research action study were a Digital Technology class of Year 10 boys, aged 13-14.

Data Collection and Analysis

Based on the reading of Mertlert (2017), data were best sourced using qualitative methods. With this in mind, data were drawn from written reflections, visual storyboarding, verbal feedback, and field notes obtained through ongoing observation (collected through notation, photographs and video). These data collection methods allowed the boys to express their thoughts, feelings, actions, and understandings of stewardship using a range of tools and techniques. Polyangulation, the use of multiple sources of data to verify consistency and accuracy, ensured that our findings demonstrated the boys’ experience.

Augmented Reality
Photo Analysis
Re-enactment
Doling
Creative Writing
Surveys
Workshops
Reflections
Interviews
Exit Tickets
Script Writing
Filing & Editing
Group Discussions
Visual Storyboarding
Lectures

The Research Action

The action involved introducing an historical context to the project the boys were undertaking. Through the use of historical photos, a re-enactment of a past event involving school army cadets, and presentations from two long-standing staff members, one current and one former, the boys were introduced to the idea of stewardship as a College virtue. The stories that were told helped inform the boys about the concept of stewardship. The boys were then provided with an opportunity to re-enact some of these historical stories and present them in an interesting way through the use of video and virtual reality.

Key Findings

Following the collection of data, time was spent analysing and coding the findings which resulted in the identification of three key themes:

• Valuing stories and their stories
• Making stories real
• Keeping stories, myths and legends alive through generations

The boys demonstrated an increased level of engagement with appreciating the history of the school and an enhanced ability to better appreciate what stewardship meant to them.

Conclusions

As the project came to a close, the boys’ reflections highlighted the importance of listening to stories rather than actually re-telling them. The three themes that emerged from the analysis of the data showed an evident link between the increased understanding of the concept of stewardship at the College with the stories shared from external sources. As storytelling is an important part of the boys’ development at College, value is added through formal teaching and learning of stewardship. This approach will be shared with colleagues for future teaching opportunities.

Key Readings