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# Using Storyline in Teacher Education: “I am now the teacher I always believed I wanted to be.”



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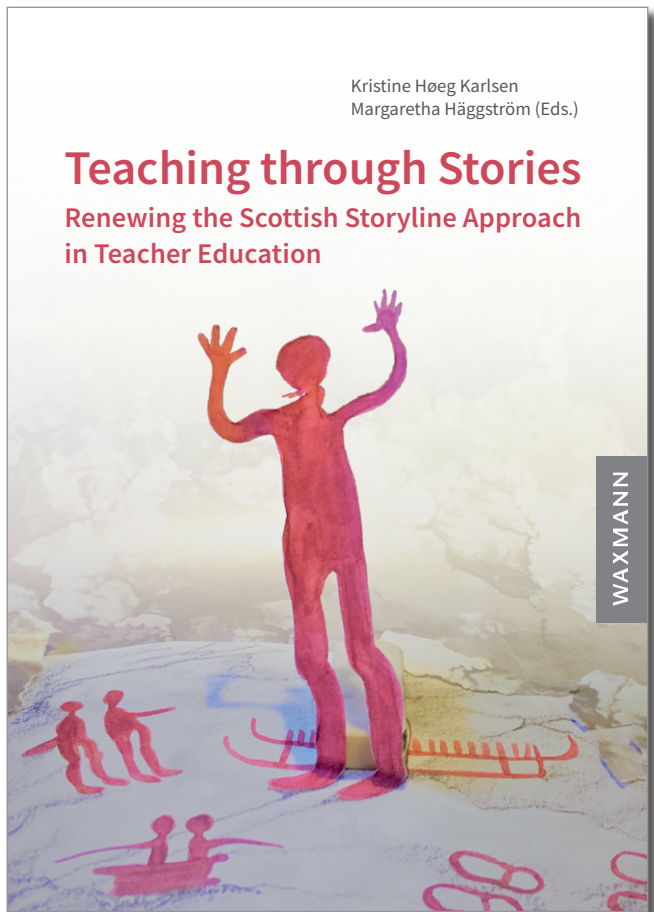
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## Chapter 3

### Using Storyline in Teacher Education:

#### “I am now the teacher I always believed I wanted to be.”

*Wendy Emo, Kenneth R. Emo, Kathryn Penrod,  
Lynda Venhuizen and Renae Ekstrand*

*Abstract* The goal of this paper is to share the perspectives of four university teacher educators who adapted their teaching to include The Storyline Approach. This biographical action research explores why the educators included Storyline, their struggles, and what they learned. Teachers' lives studies informed this work. The educators anticipated difficulties with using Storyline that generally did not materialise; the benefits they anticipated did occur. The instructors discovered benefits they did not anticipate, such as the high student enjoyment and the instructors' own desire to share the experiences of their Storyline teaching. Using Storyline enhanced the instructional affective environment; students were engaged more fully with the curriculum than in prior semesters. Storyline added personal meaningfulness to the instructors' work, which in turn contributed to positive professional identity, a key to effective teaching.

*Keywords:* innovative teaching, university teaching, biographical action research

### Introduction

Throughout the length of their careers, most teachers adapt, grow and make changes to their practice that, in their eyes, make them more effective. Our goal in this paper is to explore the perspectives of four Midwestern United States university teacher educators who, as part of an action research project, adapted their teaching to include The Storyline Approach. Each participant was a mid-career teacher who had chosen to train university students in the art and practice of teaching. This paper is one culminating product of what we learned and how we changed through this action research project.

Our action research group met periodically through the semester. Led by Wendy (lead author and researcher), our meetings included information on Storyline and conversation about the ways we were incorporating Storyline into our courses. We each brought unique personal goals to our group, but generally we were all interested in making our instruction more learner-centred and more interesting for our students. Each of us contributed our own perspective on our teaching to this paper with the guidance and organisation of Wendy. This is further explained in the methods section.

Our anticipated benefits from innovation materialised to a greater degree than anticipated, while our anticipated difficulties generally did not materialise. When innovating, we experienced issues in personal development, such as struggles with implementation, practice with innovations, and doubts regarding the innovations, similar to

experiences of innovative K-12 teachers. Our use of Storyline teaching methods led to unanticipated results such as increased enjoyment of our own teaching, establishing a collaborative culture, and changing the teaching emphasis from how to why.

In this chapter, we share our experiences of developing what was for us a new way of teaching university content: using Storyline as the container for course content. As we changed our approach to teaching and reflected on the experiences, we realised that we could also answer the following questions:

- What explains teacher-initiated curriculum innovation?
- What benefits did the teacher educators anticipate would accrue from initiating innovation with Storyline, and were these benefits realised and sustained?

We wanted to change three things in our pre-service classes: to increase student understanding, to increase student ownership, and to increase authentic or applied learning opportunities in classes which had no field component. We also found that Storyline provided tasks for the students in which they were able to explore, reflect, collaborate, and experience – thus working through their own active learning, rather than attempting a passive memorisation of course material.

Teachers' innovations often develop with struggles. Learning what works in the classroom requires practice and the freedom to experiment in the classroom, including the freedom to fail in those experiments (Loughran, 2002; Postholm, 2008). Failures can dominate teachers' memories of attempted innovations and prevent further exploration: one faculty member said of her teaching innovations at the university level, "It's crash and burn that sticks in my memory" (melba\_frilkins, 2010, January 8, par. 1). Teacher leaders should understand teacher change, particularly that which is teacher-initiated rather than administrator-initiated. Teacher leaders who examine their own metamorphosis in teaching are using one avenue for understanding change and innovation.

Teachers' self-initiated efforts at innovation, for whatever reason they are pursued, are key contributors to positive professional identity. A positive professional identity is in turn a key contributor to effective teaching (Day, et al., 2007). Teachers who innovate may simply be searching for more effective teaching, perhaps inspired by student comments (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Ritchie & Rigano, 2002). Teacher-innovators may attempt to bring personal meaning to their teaching, as noted in both the 1950s and 1970s (Jersild, 1955; Lortie, 1975). Keeping themselves interested is another possibility, since teachers' job enjoyment may be dependent in part on adding elements of diversification and complexity (Day et al., 2007; Huberman, 1993). A self-initiated innovation means that the innovator is in control of both the nature of the innovation and the level of challenge it presents to the innovator; appropriate challenge and control is related to teacher self-efficacy and an important predictor of job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Teachers who innovate in their classrooms find themselves active, energetic, and mentally stimulated. Teachers who assigned a very large role to classroom innovation are highly motivated, energetic, and dynamic throughout their careers (Huberman, 1993). Teaching has been referred to as an art (Day, 2004; Eisner, 1979) and similar to

jazz improvisation due to the variation or creativity within a structure (Nieto, 2005). But just as artists and musicians need to practice and explore variation within structure, so do teachers.

Teacher educators model and practice many strategies in their teaching. Teacher education students analyse teaching through viewing media, reading case studies, and writing autobiographies of their own past learning situations. The students also role play, write reflections, and present research in short lectures and poster sessions. Although we used all of these strategies, these alternatives did not feel adequate for our needs. Our courses were not directly tied to field experiences in schools, and in Ken's case, the course was three hours long once a week. We wanted to improve both the cognitive and affective aspects of our classes. We thought using Storyline might help.

## Conceptual Framework

*The lives of teachers* (Huberman, 1993), a study of 160 Swiss secondary teachers, has been widely cited as a seminal work in teachers' lives. After exploring the career and gaining confidence, mid-career teachers generally went through a diversification stage in which they experimented or innovated in their classrooms (or sought a different position within the school). Likewise, *The new lives of teachers* (Day & Gu, 2010), a study involving 300 UK teachers, shows that many mid-career teachers search for stimulation and challenge, thus developing and deepening "their capacity to teach their best" (p. 87).

Teachers in the diversification stage challenge themselves; in this career stage they are highly motivated and dynamic. Catalysts for innovating may be self-reflection or conversations with students or other teachers. The teacher may simply teach more effectively, or the teacher may desire for complexity, challenge, and autonomy (Emo, 2010).

Teacher educators are aware of the relationship of cognitive and affective dimensions of teaching. Teacher educators may agree that increased student engagement and ownership of learning may require that "knowledge should not be purely 'acquired' but 'lived' or 'felt'" (Hofmann, 2007, p. 73). McNaughton (2007) expanded on this in relating Storyline work to drama. She proposed that because drama participants "live through" (p. 151) dramas rather than merely watching them, their reflections and evaluations result in deeper understanding of situations. The students know the dramas are not real, but because they suspend their disbelief, they can inhabit, be aware of, and interpret both the real and the imagined world. This concept of helping students to "live" knowledge echoes situated learning theory, which argues that effective learning takes place when learners are engaged in practice (Lave & Wenger, 1996).

Continuing this thought but changing the focus to teachers, it is possible that teachers may increase their own engagement and ownership when they are involved both cognitively and affectively. It could be that teachers like to enhance the affective dimension of their work through using a teaching method such as Storyline, which depends on imagination, creativity, and responsive teaching.

## Method

Since we were investigating what effect Storyline use had on our courses, we approached this study through biographical action research (Zinn, 2004) with our multiple cases. Biographical action research “starts with observing meaningful actions” (Zinn, 2004, p. 9) and uses interviews to provide insight into why the actions occurred and how the actions changed with time. Interviews are structured and use open questioning, just as is commonly used in qualitative research interviews. The interviewees in biographical action research explain their own actions. The lead author of this paper, Wendy, taught the others about Storyline in a week-long workshop, and then interviewed the other authors as they planned their Storylines and initiated this complex change to curriculum.

Over the course of this study there were 18 individual interviews with the four co-authors over the course of 16 months; each averaged 22 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded and complemented by longhand notes taken during the interviews. Interviews took place both in the implementation semester and during successive semesters when the instructors repeated their courses and refined their original plans. A professional learning community spontaneously developed during the study, and these 3 meetings were also recorded (averaged 76 minutes each). In addition to individual interviews and group discussion, data were collected from observations, post-implementation reflections, and digital photographs of student work.

The lead author (Wendy) transcribed all notes and interviews, notes taken from the observations and photographs of student work; these formed the data. Preliminary coding revealed general comment categories which were either objective (related to curriculum) or affective (related to social or inter/intrapersonal issues). These categories provided the basis for line-by-line coding with the help of a computer assisted data analysis tool. Sub-categories in both objective and affective areas then emerged as the coding progressed; the transcripts showed that the co-authors anticipated both benefits and difficulties for their innovations with Storyline. The comments could then be grouped into additional sub-categories. Table 1 gives examples of the coding process with interview statements made before the Storylines were enacted in the co-authors’ classes. Tables 2 through 6 show the codes and whether or not the participant made remarks in those areas.

The four co-authors received the transcripts of the interviews and wrote narrative reflections. These were added to this paper to provide a fuller picture for the reader.

Gaining knowledge of teachers’ thought processes, motivations, and feelings can happen through open-ended verbal exchanges, such as those in one-on-one interviews and group meetings, as were conducted in this study. It is possible that teachers’ viewpoints could be obtained through asking participants to keep journals, but this was deemed onerous for the participants. The repeated interviews were spread over 16 months and did not reveal comments which were inconsistent within individuals over this time period.

The four participants, the co-authors, self-selected for this study. All were mid-career at the same university, and all had the ability to speak with other participants during implementation. Their career classifications were two instructors, an assistant

Tab. 1: Examples of coding the interviews

<b>Interview statement</b>	<b>Broadest category</b>	<b>Refined category</b>	<b>Code</b>
What they're going to have to do with Storyline, is they're going to have to make decisions. And they're going to have to be, themselves be, involved in a creative activity where they themselves decide how the concepts should be applied.	Objective course needs	Objective course needs: benefits	Provides application of concepts
I would like to carry over into my classroom teaching the philosophy of inquiry-based, constructivist education, and Storyline seems like a great fit.	Objective course needs	Objective course needs: benefits	Provides alignment with philosophy
I was sort of apprehensive about teaching one three-hour block once a week, and I think this Storyline will work out well.	Objective course needs	Objective course needs: benefits	Provides alternative to lecture
Though using Storyline I'm trying new approaches to helping students understand new concepts in teaching. It's going to require a lot more synthesis, a lot more evaluation, a lot more application.	Objective course needs	Objective course needs: benefits	Raises the course rigor
I think it's imperative for me to understand other ways to do curriculum. It's imperative for me to try it so that I understand it.	Affective course needs	Affective course needs: benefits	Instructor is personally learning
I am concerned about college students constructing their own knowledge.	Objective course needs	Objective course needs: difficulties	Curriculum coverage
What if my students' attitudes are: "This is weird. She's weird." Our students generally are pretty traditional and difficult to get out of their expectations.	Affective course needs	Affective course needs: difficulties	Students might not engage
There are going to be some students who are, you know, natural group saboteurs, who create some felonious-looking image with tattoos and scars and beards. With eighty-some students total who are going to be involved in this project in my sections, there are bound to be a few who resist the assignment initially and try to figure out some way to subversively undermine the validity of the project.	Affective course needs	Affective course needs: difficulties	Students might not engage

Tab. 1: Samples from the interviews showing how the statements were coded

professor, and a professor. At the time of the study, all participants taught at one Midwestern United States university. It is possible that different results could occur with different instructor or student populations.

All participants were given a statement of ethics at the outset of the study. All were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. In no way was their participation connected to any employment evaluations or any other consequence. The group discussions that developed from participant suggestions were not required-participation events.

## **Data: In Our Own Words – Stories of Innovating with Storyline in Teacher Education**

Storyline teaching in part depends on the instructor allowing plot to develop from the students' characters, questions, and ideas; this defines the instructor/student co-constructed nature of the narrative and requires the instructor to be flexible. The Storyline instructor does not know the details of every class meeting before the semester begins, as he or she might in a class dominated by lecture. Storyline requires the instructor to make a personal leap of faith that he or she will be able to control and contain the content of the class. We share below our stories of innovating with Storyline in our teacher education university classes. We include the specific changes we made to our usual teaching methods, our motivations and struggles, and our plans for future developments.

### **Ken: Using Storyline in educational psychology classes**

*Why and how I implemented Storyline.*

The challenge I faced in teaching Educational Psychology was that the class met once a week for three hours. I wanted to engage students in a meaningful student-centred task that allowed them to apply and make sense of the academic concepts. I developed a Create-a-Teen Storyline in which pairs of students created a fictitious teenager – one they believed they could have in class as their future student – and applied to this teen the concepts learned and discussed in the course. I paired students on this project so the students would talk about the concepts taught in class.

For the last hour of class each week the students worked on Create-a-Teen. With composite imaging software they gave their teen a face, and developed a biography for the teen, including the family with whom the teen lived and the personality traits of the teen. All assignments based on this teen were posted to a shared website.

*Misgivings, anticipation, and student evaluations in the first semester.*

I anticipated that there might be natural “saboteurs” whose desire to have fun might challenge the design and intent of the assignment. This did happen; students did create slightly problematic characters, such as Jewish “Jesus” (not “Hay-soos”), whose mother

was single and whose father was a carpenter, and Irish “Finney McFinnegan,” whose parents drank whiskey and fought. Concerned that these characterisations were culturally disrespectful, I intervened to encourage the students to tone down their stereotypical depictions. But I also anticipated that through working through the educational psychology of the fictional teens, the pre-service teachers might develop more compassion for the unusual student in their classrooms.

By the fourth week of class my students showed a general attitude of positive anticipation. By mid-semester I presented students with conceptually-oriented, realistic scenarios for the fictional teens which applied the concepts encountered in the educational psychology course. Each assignment was completed by the student pairs and posted, which allowed me to assess student understanding of the concept and gave students access to their classmates’ work.

At the end of the first semester I had the students evaluate the semester-long project. In general, the students gave a positive rating to the project. Many enjoyed the creative licence given them in developing their teen, and they enjoyed the ability to work with a peer in completing the assignments. They faulted the project as becoming too routine by the end of the semester: they wanted more direct interaction with other student-pairs and more involvement in designing the weekly scenarios. Upon reflection I realised that I needed use more class time to involve students in discussing the scenarios before breaking into teams to have their teen respond to the scenario.

### *Changes to the Storyline: student evaluations and instructor reflection.*

In the next semester I dedicated more class time to whole-class discussions and I had students contribute ideas for future scenarios. The following year I added a social networking component to the class, in which each teen interacted with each other and with my fictional school counsellor. This increased the interaction between the fictional teens, which meant student pairs worked more closely with other student pairs in completing assignments.

When I began the Storyline, I had a few misgivings about whether or not the students would think that the fiction would be juvenile. But I was surprised to hear positive remarks from both male and female former students about the Storyline learning. Students have said, “I really enjoyed that project that we did in Ed Psych, where we did the teens and we did the weekly postings,” and “I *loved* that project. That was so much fun.”

The Create-a-Teen Storyline was a positive learning experience for students in Educational Psychology. Storyline allowed me to process concepts with the students in a way that I wouldn’t have as effectively otherwise. It gave me the ability to assess my students in unique, more authentic ways. Positives include students interacting about the concepts discussed in class and applying these concepts to scenarios – scenarios that they may well have to deal with as future teachers.



### **Kathryn: Using Storyline in educational psychology classes**

#### *Why and how I implemented Storyline.*

I used Storyline in Educational Psychology. Like Ken, I wanted to enhance student understanding, ownership, and application of the curriculum. I altered Ken's plan to fit my one-hour, three days a week class. I had my students choose photographs of teenagers torn from magazines and then create personalities for the teens in the photographs. Students posted and responded to applications of concepts as they related to their teens, just as students in the other Ed Psych sections did. The venue contributed to student motivation and professionalism, and it allowed students to compare concept applications with each other.

#### *Misgivings, anticipation, and student evaluations.*

Because of my previous teaching experiences in using scenarios, I had a sense that the Storyline plan would work, and it definitely did, even better than I expected. I asked my students mid-semester to anonymously evaluate the project, and I was surprised by their overwhelming positive evaluations. They wrote comments like, "I never slept in class yet, and it's the only class I've never slept in," "Working in class with the teens is a good way to spend Friday afternoon," and "It makes us work with concepts in ways that I never thought I would work with concepts in a class." Later, students' course evaluations revealed that they very much appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with their classmates as they worked with the teens.

I was concerned that the created teens were uni-dimensional and idealised; they were solid young people with goals and kind, happy personalities. I inserted random events into our plot, which introduced complexity into the lives of the fictitious teens. I also separated team members so that students could work with others, such as two fictitious teens working on school projects together.

Each semester my students have recommended that I continue with the Create-A-Teen Storyline. Both my students and I have had fun participating in the work, and I feel that I know my students better than I do in other classes. The resulting relationships – partnered students, re-combined partners, and students with me – contribute to a classroom culture that is unique, safe, and ideal for learning.

### **Lynda: Using Storyline in "Integrated Curriculum in the Primary Grades."**

#### *Why and how I implemented Storyline.*

My task with my course is to help students make the transition from teaching pre-schoolers to teaching in the elementary grades. The preschool teaching philosophy is based on Reggio-Emilia, which requires the teacher to set up a learning environment, observe the children, and plan activities that will further the children's understanding. Storyline's philosophy of co-constructing learning with the learners co-constructed

philosophy was the perfect bridge for students as they transitioned from Reggio Emilia to content standards and basals.

At the beginning of the semester each student created a paper doll second grader with a personality, family background, interests, desires, and needs. They also each created settings: a second grade classroom made in a shoebox.

The college students alternated their roles between second grade student and teacher, depending on the topic. The “teachers” presented mock lessons to the “students” and experienced real-world issues such as English Language Learners and children with ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactive disorder). Each week the students would reflect in a journal on some element of teaching related to what we had covered in class or an incident that was presented. Toward the end of the semester, I revealed Storyline to them as a model and told them that they had been engaged in Storyline throughout the semester. This helped them to understand the principles of Storyline and how to apply it. One student immediately integrated this learning to her work with kindergartners in an out-of-school-time programme. The student shared weekly updates with her peers in my class.

#### *Student evaluations and changes.*

In response to a student’s suggestion, the next semester I introduced Storyline formally at the beginning of the semester. Students still created children and classrooms, and I still used incidents to which they had to respond. Students developed Storyline plans and elaborated on elements of that plan for individual and detailed lessons.

The students participated in a Storyline unfolding in a kindergarten class right across the hall from the college classroom. The kindergarten class discovered an enchanted forest, a small wooded space just outside the building, and then created imaginary animals that lived there. The kindergarten teacher visited class to discuss her Storyline, and this validated to the students that Storyline is achievable and valued by people other than myself. The college students ended the semester with positive feelings about Storyline and the delicate balance of fantasy and reality that interact in Storyline to keep children engaged, interested, and wanting more.

#### *Realisations.*

In the beginning of this Storyline quest, I feared that I would sacrifice course content by neglecting my beautifully prepared PowerPoint presentations. Upon reflection, I realised that prepared lectures run the dangers of rigid content and passive learning. My teaching evolved to become learner-centred through my first year with Storyline. I abandoned most of my PowerPoint lectures. My image of the student changed from one who is there to learn from the teacher to one who is competent, one who has learned from a lifetime of being a student. Because my teaching communicated this trust to my students, my students felt safe to engage in rich dialogue about their choices and own experiences. They became the experts and learned from each other. My job was to

provoke them, to provide some incidents for them to carefully consider, research, and then develop their own responses.

Storyline has brought new life into my teaching. I feel that I am now the teacher I always believed I wanted to be.

### **Renae: Using Storyline for learning about special education**

#### *Why and how I implemented Storyline.*

My class “Early Intervention and Family Centered Practices” was designed to help prepare early childhood professionals serve children with exceptionalities and their families. There was no practicum or field experience component, so Storyline would provide students with an alternate form of experiential learning. The Storyline took place over just a few weeks.

The students each created a paper doll child. Students then wrote a short biography of the child, including age, personality traits, family members and other information the students thought relevant. While students were working on this activity in class, there was a lot of positive interaction among the students. Students commented about each other’s artwork and creativity; they were interested in each other’s children, and they exchanged ideas. I was pleased students were opening up to each other and a sense of community was developing within the classroom through the common activity. Each child’s creator was visibly connected to his or her own child and seemed to display parental pride and protectiveness.

The first incident involved learning about disabilities. I randomly handed out to each student a note card which had a disability written on it. I explained that their child had just been diagnosed with that disability.

#### *Student reactions to the Storyline.*

Student reactions to being told their child had been diagnosed with a disability were revealing. Some students were upset and immediately came up to me after class wanting to know about the disability or to tell me about a person they knew who went through the real experience of discovering there was something “wrong” with their child. I thought my own response to one student’s feelings particularly interesting: when the “parent” of the foetal alcohol syndrome child reacted, I quickly gave her an out, saying, “You know, she could be adopted.” The student accepted that explanation of the fictional situation. The next semester I did this activity, I added a reflection assignment asking students to write about their feelings and immediate reaction to being told their child had a disability and to think about how going through this experience would help them as a professional working with families.

Students researched the disability which was written on their card and then wrote a letter from a parent’s perspective explaining that disability to their child’s teacher. The letter included information about the disability as well as the parent’s hopes and fears for their child. Students presented their letters to the class. I was amazed at the amount

of information that they gave. They expressed and demonstrated understanding, instead of just parroting definitions of special needs classifications.

In the role of teacher, the students responded to the parent's letter. The teachers provided information on inclusive and developmentally appropriate programming. We also used the information to write individual educational plans for the children.

### *Realisations.*

In the past, I assigned students to research and present information on various disabilities, but an emotional element was missing. With students creating their own child and putting thought and effort into developing the child's profile and sharing their child with their classmates, they felt connected to this child. Learning their child had a disability elicited strong emotions and students were motivated to learn about this disability because it was about their child, not just because it was an assignment. Putting themselves in the position of the child's parent, they not only shared factual information about the disability, but they also had to think about how it would affect a parent to learn their child had this disability and what fears, dreams and hopes they could have for their child. When the students had to put themselves into the position of a teacher who might be working with a child with a disability, they had to learn about the responsibilities involved as a professional in the field of early childhood special education. These experiences provided a powerful outlet for students to explore both sides of the early childhood team – both the family member's and professional's perspective. None of my students asked, "Why should we do this? Am I getting a grade for this?"

Rather than using just the textbook and handouts, lecture, research and presentations to cover the content of the course, using The Storyline Approach allowed me to integrate content, skills and concepts through a learner-centred, activity or discovery approach method and also model and practise successful differentiated group work. I as the instructor had a plan for what curriculum and content needed to be covered but it was truly brought to life through the imagination, creativity and work of the students.

## **Results**

In this section we share what we discovered through using Storyline in teacher education.

As we thought about and planned for using Storyline, we anticipated both benefits and difficulties. These benefits and difficulties each further fitted into two categories: objective and affective factors. Objective factors are those such as covering curriculum and providing concept application. Affective factors are both interpersonal and intrapersonal issues which affect teaching, such as the teacher's own feelings about the class, student contributions, classroom dynamics, and the teacher's need to socialise. We felt strongly enough about the anticipated benefits that although we anticipated difficulties, we went ahead with the Storylines.

Tables 2 through 5 each show one of the refined categories coded from the interviews. Each code is shown, along with whether or not the participant made remarks in that coded area (signified by the “x” in the box). These tables also show whether or not the

Tab. 2: Objective course needs – benefits of using TSA

Code		Renaë	Lynda	Ken	Kathryn
Provides application of concepts	Anticipated		x	x	x
	Found		x	x	x
Raises the course rigor	Anticipated		x	x	
	Found		x	x	
Provides alignment with philosophy	Anticipated	x	x		
	Found	x	x		
Provides alternative to lecture	Anticipated	x	x	x	
	Found	x	x	x	

Tab. 2: Benefits the instructors anticipated and later found regarding using TSA in objective areas of course design and implementation.

Tab. 3: Affective course needs – benefits of using TSA

Code		Renaë	Lynda	Ken	Kathryn
Instructor is personally learning	Anticipated	x	x		
	Found	x	x	x	x
Instructor’s socialisation with other instructors	Anticipated	x			
	Found	x	x	x	x
Provides challenge and opportunity for refinement	Anticipated	x	x	x	
	Found	x	x	x	x

Tab. 3: Benefits the instructors anticipated and later found regarding using TSA in affective areas of course design and implementation.

Tab. 4: Objective course needs – difficulties of using TSA

Code		Renaë	Lynda	Ken	Kathryn
Curriculum coverage concerns	Anticipated	x			
	Found	x			
Students will think TSA is inappropriate for their age	Anticipated	x		x	
	Found				
Assessment will be difficult	Anticipated			x	x
	Found			x	x
Technology creates difficulties	Anticipated			x	
	Found			x	
Will take more time in class than lecture	Anticipated	x	x	x	x
	Found		x	x	x

Tab. 4: Difficulties the instructors anticipated and later found regarding using TSA in objective areas of course design and implementation.

participant's remark was made before the Storyline was enacted ("anticipated") or after ("found") the participant used Storyline in his or her teaching. Tables 2 and 3 show the benefits anticipated and found; Tables 4 and 5 show the difficulties anticipated and found.

Tab. 5: Affective course areas—difficulties of using TSA

Code		Renaë	Lynda	Ken	Kathryn
Instructor feels nervous	Anticipated	x			
	Found				
Students might give negative feedback	Anticipated	x			
	Found				
Students might not engage	Anticipated	x		x	
	Found				
Honouring student contributions might be difficult	Anticipated			x	
	Found	x	x	x	x

Tab. 5: Difficulties the instructors anticipated and later found regarding using TSA in affective areas of course design and implementation.

The participants also experienced benefits of using Storyline which they did not anticipate before starting to teach with Storyline (see Table 6). All of these were in the affective course areas, or topics which are inter- and intrapersonal. None of the participants made remarks about objective course areas (related to curriculum) which they did not anticipate before enacting the Storyline.

Tab. 6: Affective areas – unanticipated benefits

Code	Renaë	Lynda	Ken	Kathryn
Better student interactions		x		x
Better classroom management	x	x		x
Higher confidence in student understanding of concepts				x
Instructor's desire to share with others	x	x	x	x
Continued teaching change		x	x	x
Positive feedback from students	x	x	x	x

Tab. 6: Benefits of using TSA which the instructors did not anticipate but did encounter in affective areas of course design and implementation.

## Discussion

In this section we revisit the stories told above. This section also includes findings from the interviews. We were interested to discover that we had commonalities, particularly in our anticipations and our triumphs.

### **Increased student understanding and ownership of the curriculum**

We all thought that The Storyline Approach would accomplish the goals of increasing student understanding and ownership; we also valued it for the applied experience in courses which did not have field components. We initially thought also that The Storyline Approach might help raise the course rigour. Ken anticipated that the developed characters might help the university students—predominately conventional learners—develop perspectives for working with their future students who learned in unconventional ways.

We found that the co-constructed, narrative teaching did engage our students and increase understanding, though the evidence of increased understanding was not compared empirically. Storyline provided an alternative to lecture and thus better aligned the course delivery with our philosophy of teaching.

### **Shared concerns, differences, and struggles with implementation**

Just as we shared an anticipation of engaging students, we shared two main concerns: (1) that students would think that creating the fiction was juvenile and beneath the level of university work, and (2) that creating the fiction might take too much time from learning course content.

These concerns did not materialise. Students did not think the fictional work juvenile in any of the classes; to the contrary, other faculty overheard students from different sections of Educational Psychology sharing their fictional work with each other outside of class time. We found that content fit into the narrative fairly well, though Renae used the fictional Storyline for only a few weeks while the others used it for organising most of the semester's work.

We did not use Storyline in exactly the same applications. Ken and Renae did not use created settings, but Kathryn incorporated a setting even in the first iteration of her Storyline. Lynda tried both using settings and not using settings; she eventually decided that created settings contributed to student participation, ownership, and understanding. Ken incorporated Facebook as a way to engage students in more conversation with each other. All of us required students to respond to others' contributions. We realised that learning for both the faculty members and the students occurred through collaborative participation, which is recommended as effective for both students and teachers (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005).

We did struggle a bit with using Storyline. These struggles included abandoning lectures prepared for previous semesters, learning new technology applications, negotiating classroom display space, and supporting students in learning in a different way. Waiting for students to discover the implications of concepts for their teaching practice was a challenge when the temptation was to lecture the point into students.

All of us encountered instances where it was a bit difficult to honour student contributions, such as when students created stereotyped or idealised characters. These struggles reflect Hofmann's (2007) comment that it is not always easy for teachers to allow their students ownership while also making sure learning goals are met and cur-

riculum coverage is achieved. However, increasing student ownership was one of the goals of this innovation.

### **Results we did not anticipate.**

We did not anticipate positive personal results, such as the increased enjoyment of our own teaching, which did become evident. It is possible that the enjoyment factor was due to the element of students' emotions being engaged in their learning and due to the element of play (creating the characters and enacting the drama of the Storylines) which became included in the university work. Kaasila and Lauriala (2010) remind teacher educators that teachers' emotional experiences with reform influence their risk-taking. We experienced positive emotional experiences and continued to tinker with our innovations, or risk taking, in following semesters.

We did not anticipate our students engaging in and enjoying the work as much as they did, nor did we foresee that we would develop a collaborative culture between ourselves as instructors, which helped develop shared expertise. Because the personal connection and the plot of Storyline provided a level of engagement and thought we had not previously seen, we saw that both teaching and student learning seemed to change from an emphasis on what and how to an emphasis on why – definitely a result we did not anticipate.

## **Conclusions**

We created for ourselves a high level of task complexity through using Storyline to adapt the curriculum, and we found the first semester of this time-consuming, as is common in major innovations. At the same time, however, like the diversification-stage teachers in Huberman's study (1993), we found that we were energised in our risk-taking. We looked forward to being with our students and participating in our creative learning ventures; in a curious cycle, we became more motivated to teach because our students were engaged. The personal connection and the plot of Storyline provided a level of engagement and thought that we had not previously seen in our students. The unexpected benefit was, as Kathryn remarked, "We're having so much fun with it that it's not work." Using Storyline definitely enhanced the affective environment of our classes, and we found to our surprise that the students engaged more fully with the curriculum than in prior semesters.

It can be tempting for university instructors to adhere to a proven syllabus and familiar methods. However, preservice teachers will benefit from their instructors modelling innovative teaching (Loughran & Russell, 2002). Collegial and administrative elements of support were not essential to the innovations, but the support certainly created a risk-tolerant innovation atmosphere. The same elements of support are conducive to innovative teaching in K-12 classrooms (Fullan, 2007; Day & Gu, 2010).

Our experiences show that university instructors experience issues in development similar to those of K-12 teachers. We struggled with elements, such as abandoning "beautifully prepared PowerPoint presentations" so that students themselves could



become experts. We practised with the innovations, as shown by our planning, implementing, getting feedback, and then changing plans for successive classes. We pursued the complexity of teaching with Storyline, not for the reason of desiring complexity as a way to keep ourselves interested in our jobs, but for the reason of addressing the course needs. Just as teacher studies have shown for decades (Jersild, 1955; Lortie, 1975), we found that our innovations added to the personal meaningfulness of our work; knowing that the students thought the courses were memorable was particularly meaningful. Our efforts at innovation were contributors to positive professional identity, which is in turn, key to effective teaching (Day et al., 2007). We didn't really think of this until we analysed our comments about what our students said and Lynda's remark, "I am now the teacher I always believed I wanted to be."

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