

Nested Narratives

What is it?

An interactive space for people to make sense of their experience and their identities, by exploring their own stories and associations in a range of modes and media. [The initial parts of the approach are based on the Biographic Narrative Interview Method].

Strengths

- Elicits, captures, and allows further exploration of the person's own stories in their own voice (literally and metaphorically)
- Enables the person to explore and articulate tacit and deep tacit understandings of their own experience.
- Enables the person to remain in their own story space, and set their own agenda.
- Includes a range of media and modes, from face-to-face to multi-media to kinesthetic (touch) interfaces.
- Provides rich interactive multi-modal texts that can be used (with the story teller's permission) for conversations, analysis, and exemplars: for formal research; for portfolios; for interaction with tutors and mentors, with peers, at work, and informally in the community.
- Provides multi-layered reflection and critical thinking in depth, by doing, not by instruction.
- Can be applied to experiences in a wide range of settings: in education, at work, and in the community.
- Provides a practical, activity based method for researching the ontological as well as the epistemological issues of learning and student experience.

Weaknesses

- Requires a trained facilitator for the initial story telling process. People can be trained to interview each other, but some measure of support is required.
- The multi-media and multi-modal associations and links take some time to add. The rich, multi-layered texts that result more than justify this.

Process

- The story teller tells a story about a particular experience or event. .
- The facilitator listens and takes notes, and asks for more detail of particular parts of the story. The original story and the subsequent 'nested' stories are audio recorded.
- All these story elements are transcribed, and the story teller decides how to cut the transcript into story elements. Each transcription, and its associated audio clip is captured in an interactive interface.
- The story teller can then link and add associations and texts related to each story element within the interactive interface.
- More layers of associations and commentary can be added, using different media and modes, including kinaesthetic or Tactile User Interfaces (TUI's).
- The resulting interactive text is used by the researcher, by the story teller, and (with permission) by others too, each for their own purposes. The story teller may later add further links and associations, so the sense making process does not have to 'end'.



Examples from the Learner Experience projects

The *Affordances for Learning* project developed and used the Nested Narratives approach to research student learning, particularly with mature students returning to do Foundation Degrees. With the addition of the interactive graphic interface, the project has changed radically.

What started out as a project to elicit stories about learning with minimal research interference has turned into a methodology for people to make sense of their experience and their emerging identities on their own terms and in their own voice, using their own associations in a range of media and modes.

The process of exploring sense making has become a sense making and learning experience *in itself*, which goes far beyond traditional reflection. The resulting artefacts are no longer 'research data', collected once and for all. They are sense making tools which have ongoing parallel lives, as it were: on the one hand, in the community and in the lives of the story tellers, and on the other hand as research artefacts and texts.

These artefacts also have yet another, potential, 'life' as interactive research 'reports', which would be 'read' interactively, and as interactive portfolio and exemplar artefacts, which would also be 'read' interactively. This opens up new ways of producing and circulating the results of research.

Potential Links

1. Interview Plus

The two methods seem to complement each other. The 'created artefacts' and the 'stories and associated texts' functions in the two methods overlap, as *guided recall* or *facilitated articulations of the tacit*.

2. Digital Story Telling

Digital Story Telling and Nested Narratives are both created within the story teller's own story space and sense making endeavours.

3. Portfolios

Nested Narratives have value, in themselves, as individual and often quite private sense making processes and subsequently, artefacts. So although Nested Narratives cant just be picked up and copied into Portfolios, they can be rich resources for the story teller to use and to selectively 'mine' for adding to Portfolios.

4. Learning and Research

It seems quite possible to integrate these particular forms of research and learning, and to make the research process an ongoing learning experience not only for the researcher, but for the learners too.

Recipe card provided by
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