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PILOTING TRAINING REPORT

University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Education
Slovenia

DIGITAL STORIES - Reducing Early School
Leaving by Increasing Academic Achievement
with Digital Applications in Storytelling
Techniques

2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000087898



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1. Introduction

The pilot training took place at the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana in five sessions between June 13 and 27, 2024. We followed the work plan agreed by the project partners at previous meetings and during the training of trainers in April 2024 in Ljubljana.

The main idea of the pilot training was to present the developed learning materials and didactic recommendations to the Slovenian teachers, evaluate the materials and didactic approach and take into account the evaluation results in order to prepare possible improvements of the learning materials and teaching methods after the training for the final version of the modules.

2. Target Group Description

The pilot training took place at the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana in five non-consecutive sessions in June 2024. 17 teachers from three Slovenian elementary school (OŠ Majde Vrhovnik Ljubljana, OŠ Šmartno pri Slovenj Gradecu and OŠ Gabrovka-Dole) took part. The first school is located in the Slovenian capital, the second in a small town in the eastern part of Slovenia and the third in a village in a rural area in the southern part of Slovenia. The participating teachers were guided in the learning process by teacher trainers, their colleagues, who participated in a train-the-trainer course organised by the project partners in Ljubljana in April 2024. The majority of participating teachers were women, which is statistically significant for the population of Slovenian teachers.

3. Piloting Description

The Slovenian project team carefully prepared the pilot teacher training in cooperation with 4 participants of the trainer training.

In addition to the official website of the Erasmus+ Digital Stories project and the online learning platform, we have created a virtual classroom in Moodle where we have collected the Slovenian translation of all presentations of the trainers' training in Ljubljana (lectures in the morning and presentations of modules in the afternoon sessions), additional handouts of relevant presentations prepared by the project team (about UDL, multimedia learning, ...), video recordings of the presentations from trainers training and other relevant presentations (about game-based learning, ...).

The most important part of the Moodle virtual classroom were various activities that required the active participation of teachers. We wanted to increase the efficiency of learning and took into account some comments from the trainer training where participants suggested more active forms of learning. We therefore designed our pilot training according to the principle of "flipped learning". Participants had to work through the modules presented in the trainer training in pairs and then prepare their own presentations in pairs, taking into account the specific characteristics of their students, their cultural background and our national curriculum. All of these presentations were recorded and are available in the MOODLE virtual



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classroom for massive use in the months and years to come. Each presentation, prepared by pairs of teachers in the pilot training, was followed by a discussion in which all participants actively participated and which was led by trainers and members of the national project team. All learning materials created are also collected in Moodle and are available to all teachers in Slovenia.

4. Promotional Activities

The Erasmus+ project "Digital Stories", its objectives, the developed learning materials and the original teaching and learning methods have been widely presented in Slovenia through various activities at the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, through various communication channels and publications relevant for teachers in Slovenia, as well as through the activities of the participants of the project's teacher training programme.

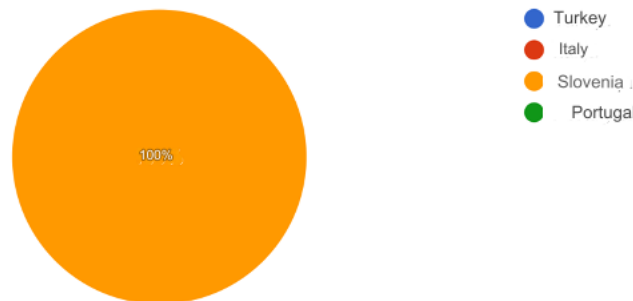
We expect that additional, even more efficient promotion will take place by the end of 2024, when the pilot teacher training participants will implement the modules for their students and present them and their experiences at a national Slovenian teachers' conference.

5. Analysis of the teachers' questionnaires

A. Demographic Features of Participants

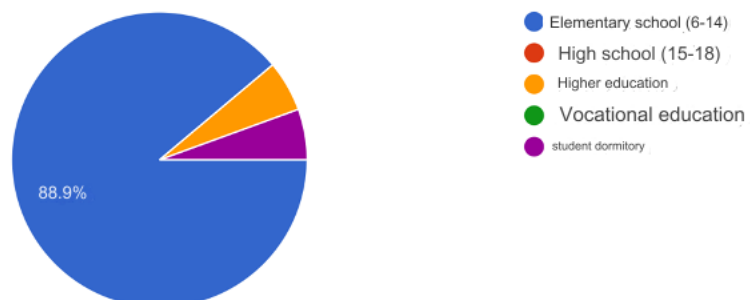
Choose the country where you live:

18 responses



Choose the type of institution you work at:

18 responses



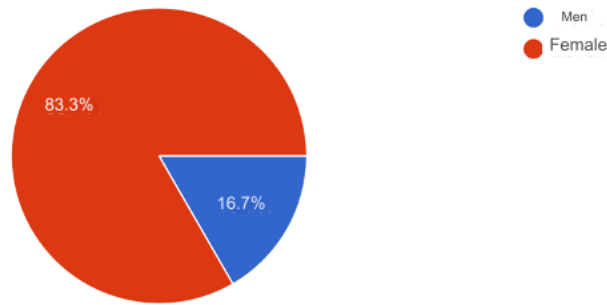


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Gender

18 responses

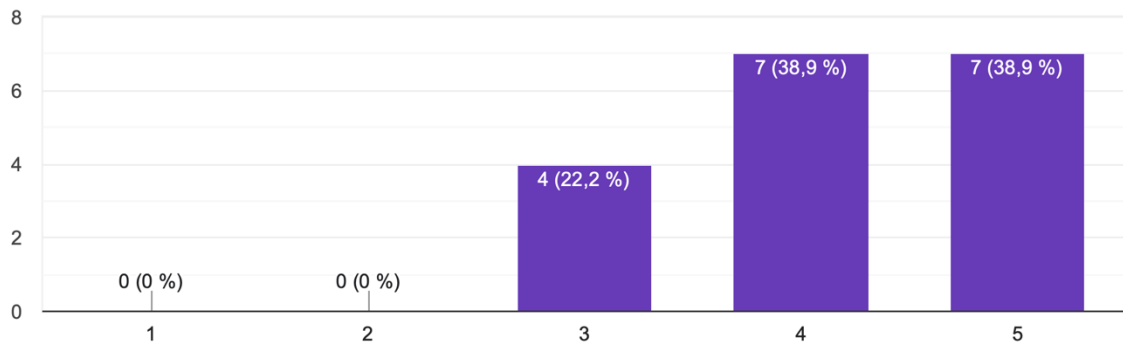


B. Comparisons of Pre- and Post-Test

How useful are the learning modules and other materials produced by the Digital Stories project for your work with students?

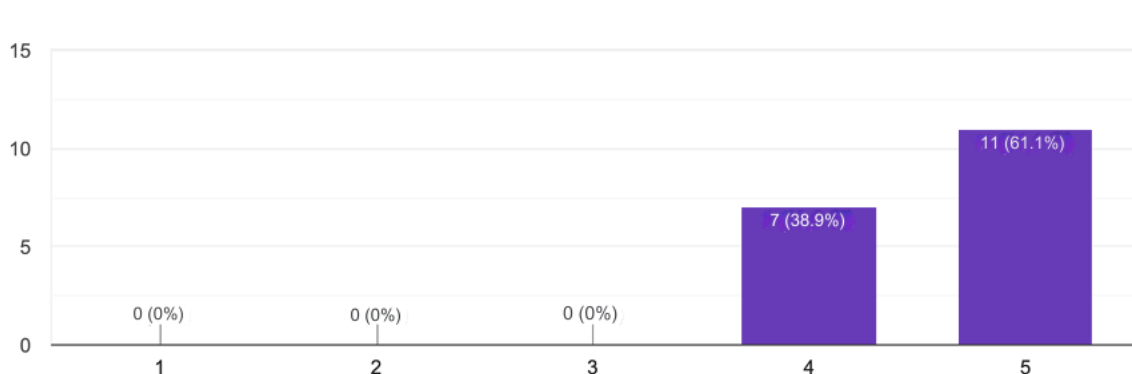
Pre-test

18 responses



Post-test

18 responses





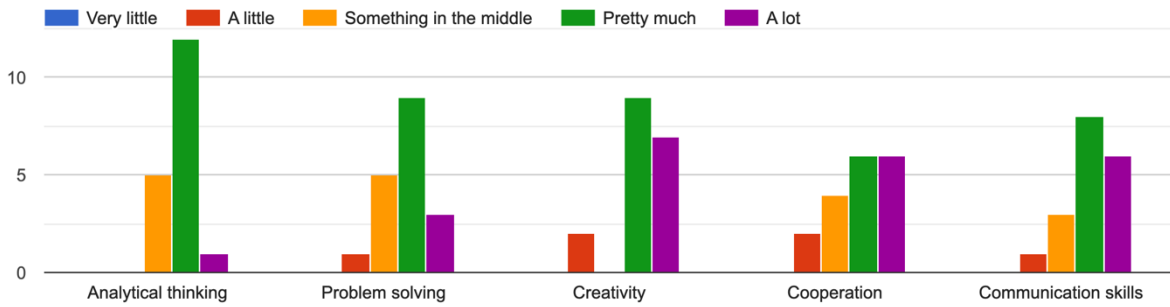
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To what extent can using digital storytelling helps students to develop the following skills?

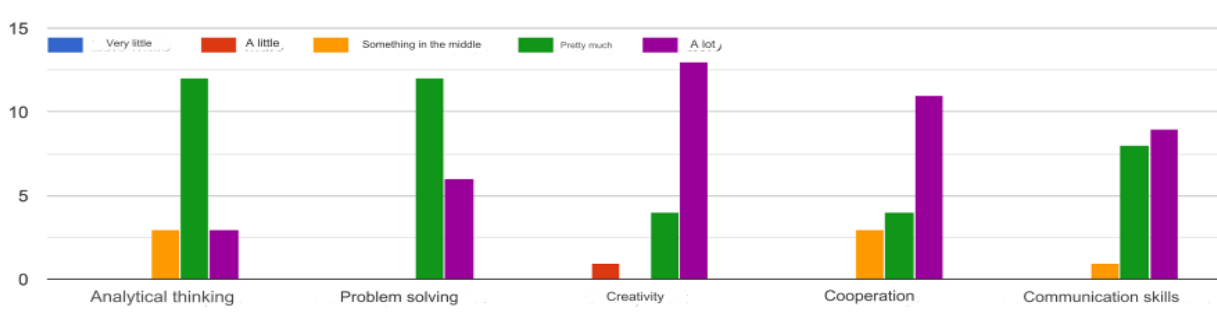
Pre-test

18 responses



Post-test

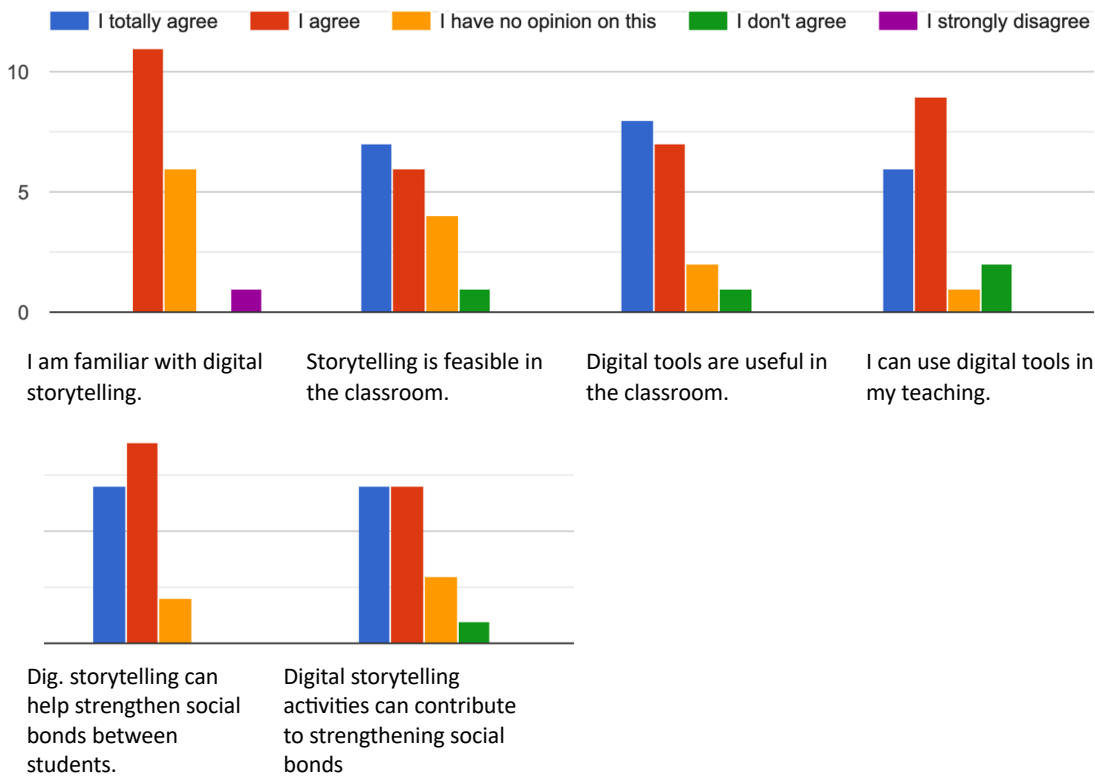
18 responses



Please select the extent to which you agree with the statements below:

Pre-test

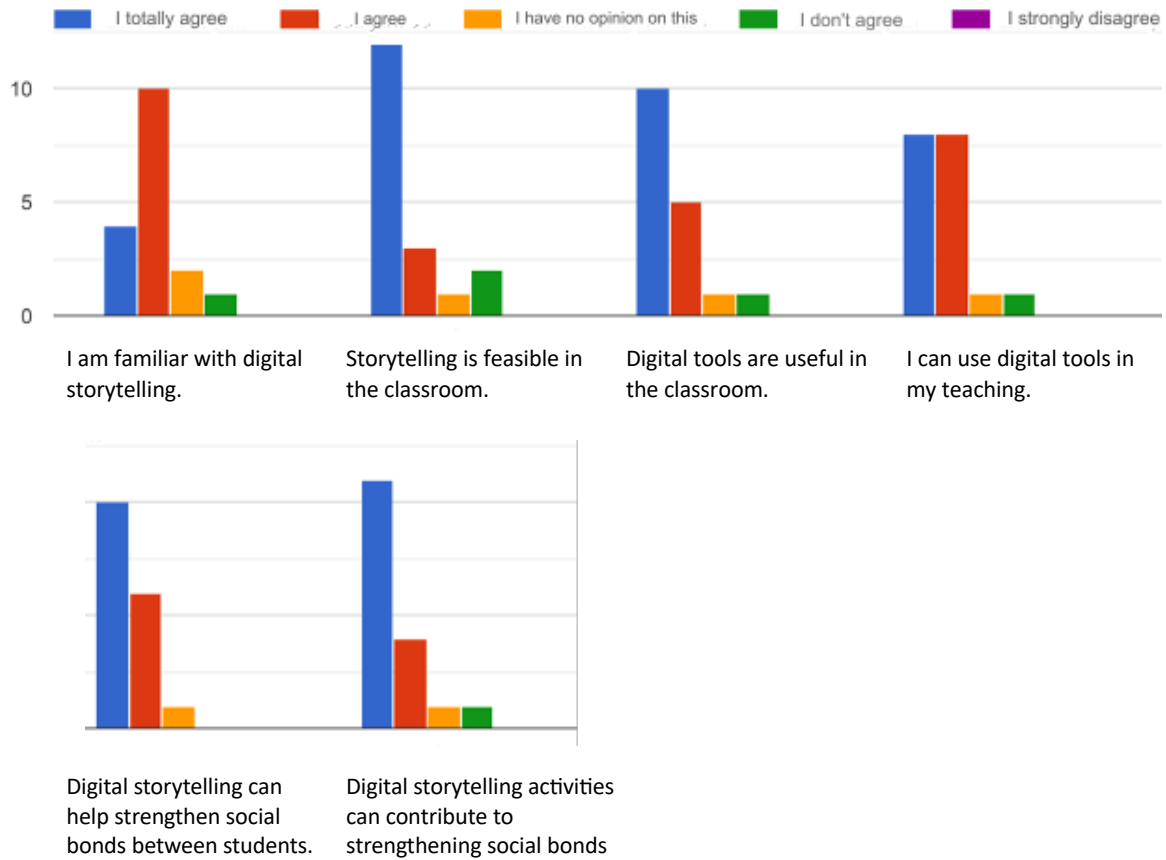
18 responses





Post-test

18 responses



C. Results of Post Test

Why did you decide to participate in the project?

18 responses

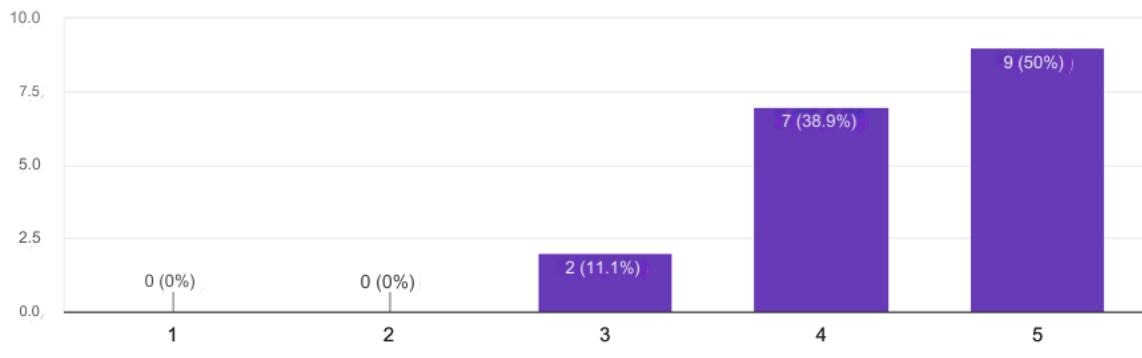
- Because I'm interested :-)
- When my colleague showed me the modules, I was impressed and decided to take part.
- Useful examples/modules and the possibility of classroom implementation.
- New knowledge
- Acquiring new skills
- Use of ICT tools, cooperation with teachers from abroad
- I joined at the initiative of my colleague
- I was invited by a colleague.
- Inviting a colleague and sharing experiences
- and a desire for new knowledge.
- I keep up to date.
- Inviting a colleague
- I was invited by my colleagues
- Learning about new content that would be useful in school.
- Because it was an interesting topic for me.
- I liked the content of the modules - it would be good to discuss these topics with students



- For useful content.
- To bring digital storytelling methods into the leisure activities of the hostel when working with students.

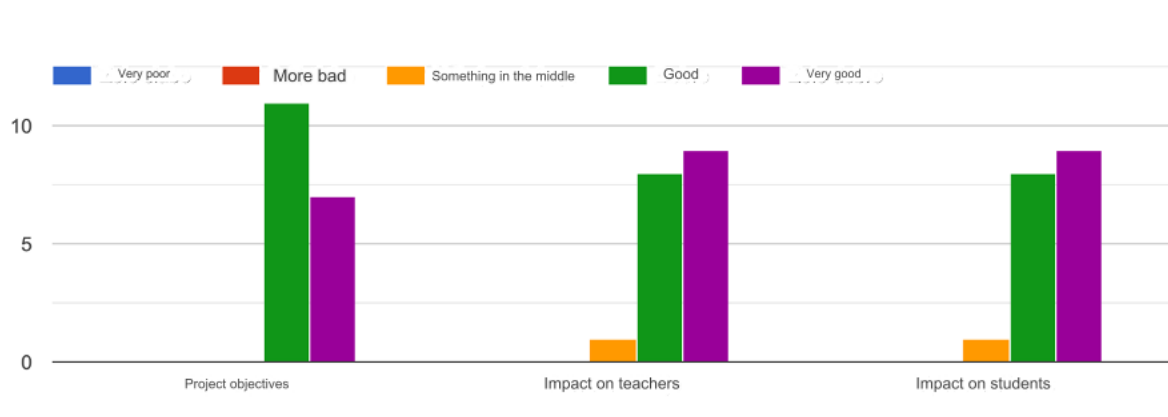
Was the Digital Stories learning environment and its content easy to use?

18 answers



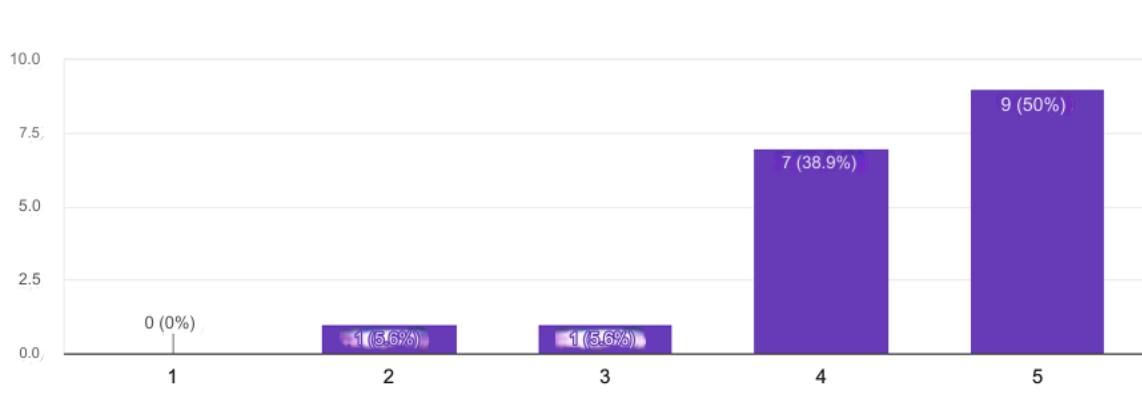
What do you think of the Digital Stories project?

18 answers



What do you think of the project website?

18 answers





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What have you learned about online tools?

16 replies

- I have learnt about many different ones and how we use them.
- Useful gadgets and tools.
- They are useful.
- Using new apps
- How to use them with students
- Versatile usability
- Gain new knowledge and perspectives
- How can I use them in the classroom.
- Story Jumper
- What programmes exist and how to integrate the modules into your lessons.
- I learned about some new tools and how to use them.
- I was already familiar with some of the online tools, but it is interesting and useful to learn about new ones that can be used in different subjects (not only in this project).
- I have been introduced to new online tools and find them very useful. Many of them can be integrated into the classroom itself.
- Many - most of them I didn't know and I find them useful for an activity in the classroom (motivation, final evaluation, brainstorming, etc.).
- So that we can use them in original ways.
- Some new apps for editing and composing text and photos

What did you learn about storytelling in the project?

16 replies

- How stories can be used to address important issues for young people.
- How can I integrate specific topics into my teaching (cross-curricular teaching)
- They are a starting point for conversations
- To make linguistically rich stories have a greater impact on learners
- The importance of the tension of the story, the unexpected denouement, the humorous spots
- A good tool, a motivator...
- How to make better use of ICT technology
- How we can use it.
- According to the modules given in the online classroom.
- That we can change the world with a story.
- Stories can be told in different ways. It is not only the story that is important, but above all the interpretation, the recreation.
- Stories need to be age-appropriate and it is good to draw on real life. There are many possibilities.
- I learnt about new online tools and collaborative learning for storytelling
- To combine traditional and digital ways of teaching.
- That it is beneficial for children and adolescents and can help them to express themselves and take care of their psycho-physical state/health.

What have you learned about digital storytelling in the project?

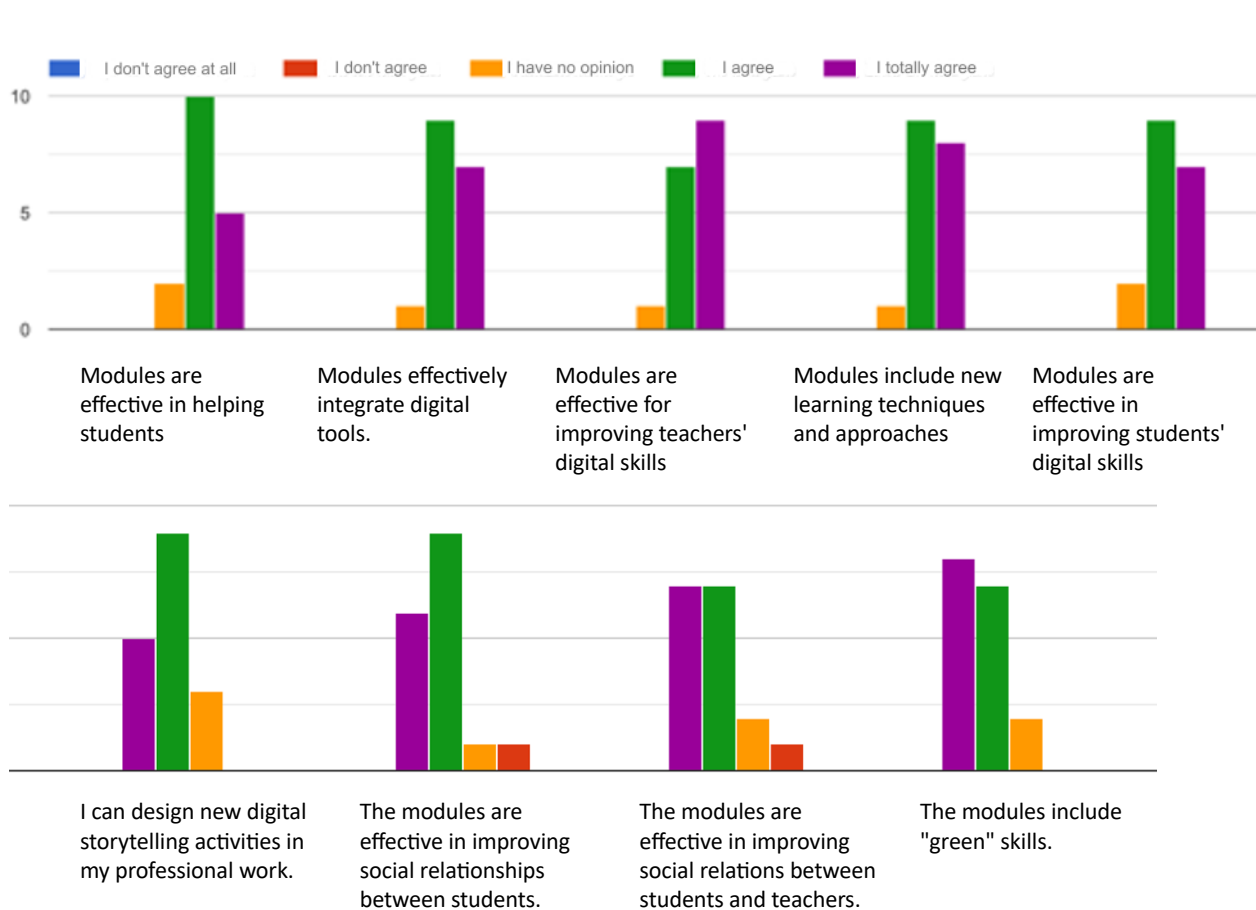
16 replies

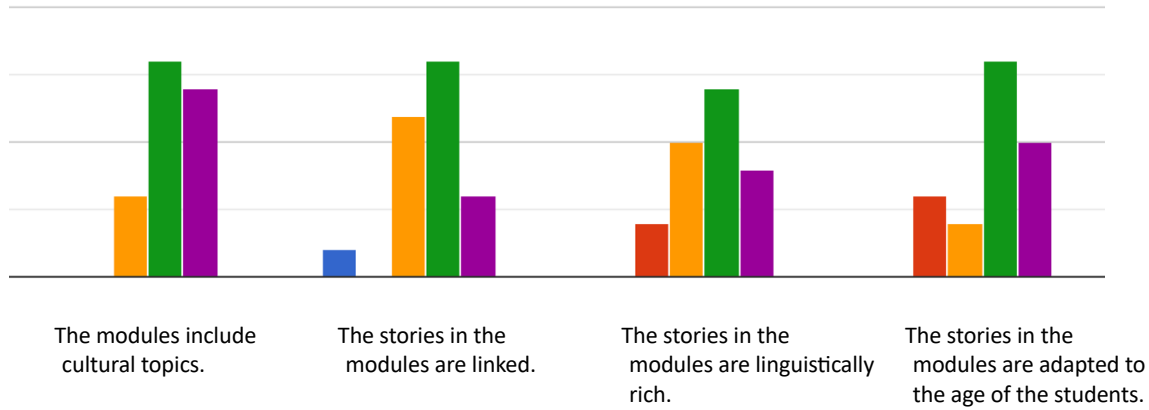
- So that we can link it well.
- Using specific tools and aids for classroom work.



- They are a useful form
- To make them more interesting for students
- The need to plan your work well, to be familiar with digital tools
- An interesting and modern approach to teaching
- New experiences
- To make lessons more interesting
- Making.
- How to integrate them into class lessons.
- I've been introduced to the Story Jumper tool.
- Different tools for storytelling or demonstration.
- So that students can be very actively involved and learn a lot from it.
- Storyjumper is an interesting tool that guides students to create a story. I think it's good for them to process a theme through a story - to be creative, active and collaborative.
- They can also be used digitally to integrate a wide range of topics into the classroom.
- The digital environment allows for creative expression through the use of digital technologies, which is more appealing to adolescents and children and therefore easier to engage them in.

To what extent do you agree with the statements below?





D. Evaluation Overall

If we compare the results of the pre- and post-tests, we can see that there has been a clear improvement in all comparable features.

Teachers rated the usefulness of the teaching materials that we developed as part of the project significantly better; the rating in the post-test (from 1 to 5) is 0.45 higher. At the end of the training, participants also rated the impact of digital storytelling on skills in the areas of analytical thinking, problem solving, creativity and collaboration as well as communication skills much better. The greatest impact was achieved in the areas of creativity, problem solving and cooperation at work. When the participants of the pilot training were informed about the aim of the project and decided to participate in our digital storytelling course, most of them stated that they find digital stories useful. However, at the end of the training, all participants stated that they find digital stories useful in their teaching practice. Although the majority of participants before training believed in the effectiveness of digital storytelling in promoting 21st century skills in students, their opinions improved as the training progressed.

Teachers' self-assessment of their knowledge of storytelling with digital technology, their ability to use it in the classroom, the usefulness of this pedagogical approach and the usefulness of this area for improving collaboration between students and between students and teachers improved significantly.

The main reasons for participating in the training are the teachers' desire to improve the quality of their teaching, to get to know modern pedagogical approaches through active learning and the use of digital technology, the relevance of the topics in today's school practice and the desire for professional cooperation with teachers at home and abroad.

The results of the post-test clearly showed that the participants found the project's training platform useful. They also indicated that they found the modules developed for the project useful for students to develop a positive attitude towards the courses in which they have a negative attitude due to various prejudices and fears that students have and also due to learning difficulties. In addition, teachers can use the multisensory learning model to appeal to the senses of the target group on topics that they find difficult to teach in class.

Participants also found out they modules promote green skills, which is another objective of the project and one of them is explicitly designed for the topic of "green skills". Participating teachers found the modules age-appropriate for the original target group, but in our



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interviews, teachers teaching younger students agreed that they could adapt the modules to the age group they were teaching. They commented on the linguistic diversity of the learning material, which is probably due to the double translation (original - English - mother tongue) and the differences between the various cultural backgrounds.

In the open-ended questions about new online tools, teachers were enthusiastic about learning about new tools, but also about new ways to use familiar tools for more active learning, to support collaboration and for new multimedia learning opportunities. All of this is also closely related to the digital competencies for teachers, which are gathered and conceptualised in the DIGCOMPEDU model that we presented to the participants in the introductory lectures.

When asked about the importance of storytelling, teachers pointed out, among other things, that stories can be used to address important issues for young people, that they serve as a starting point for conversations, that they are motivating, and that they are useful and applicable for young people to express themselves and take care of their psychophysical health.

In addition to all the benefits of the S, the DS further increases students' motivation, trains them in the use of digital technologies, improves creativity and expression with the right tools and offers new opportunities for teamwork and collaboration. All of these opportunities are best summarised in the response of one participant who wrote: "The digital environment allows for creative expression through the use of digital technologies, which is more appealing to adolescents and children and therefore easier to engage them."

6. Conclusions

Although we had to conduct the pilot training at a very inconvenient time at the end of the school year, when teachers are very busy with various school commitments, we are extremely satisfied with the training and its results.

The evaluation of the questionnaires on the implementation of the training shows that we achieved our objectives to a high degree and that the teachers learned a lot and were satisfied with the implementation.

A particular success was the implementation of active forms of learning for the participants using the flipped learning method, in which they studied the teaching materials and all 10 modules that we developed as part of the project in advance. In our meetings, we then delved deeper into the topics studied and clarified any ambiguities that arose during the study. We were particularly pleased with the presentations of the modules that the teachers prepared as lesson plans for their students, who represent a special target group, taking into account the specific context, the adaptation to the level of the subject and the integration into the curriculum.

In this context, I would also like to emphasise the important role of the teacher- trainers, who had previously been trained in trainers training and then acted as a link between the members of the project team and the teachers.



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It is also important that all materials prepared jointly by the project team members and the teacher trainers, and then by the participants in the form of lesson preparations and recorded presentations and discussions, are subsequently accessible to all teachers in a special online classroom.

Also important are some suggestions for improving the teaching materials and, above all, ideas on how the lessons developed in the project can be integrated into the curriculum of Slovenian primary and secondary schools, which is very rigid and does not leave much room for such activities. On the advice of the teachers, the planned training courses could be carried out as "activity days", which are planned and are the only ones that allow the necessary flexibility.

The participating teachers also suggested that the project activities could be continued in the new school year when the prepared activities and games could be used in the school and the results could then be presented to a wider audience at one of the regular annual national vocational teachers' conferences.