PLATFORM TESTING REPORT

FINAL REPORT

EU-Track

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

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Contents

Introduction

This report consolidates the findings from the Digital Storytelling Project Platform testing conducted across multiple countries, including Turkey, Italy, Slovenia, and Portugal, as part of Work Package 3 - Online interactive learning/teaching platform. Sessions were held in Bafra Kodlama Merkezi, Samsun (9th October 2024), Fatih Atatürk Çağdaş Yaşam Çok Programlı Anadolu Lisesi, Istanbul (10th October 2024), the Institute Comprehensive "Milani," Terracina (9th September 2024), as well as in Slovenia and Portugal. Additionally, students tested the platform at Yildiz Technical University with Faculty of Education to evaluate its effectiveness in delivering rich and practical teaching of the project outcomes. This activity was completed on 25th December 2024.

Participants tested platform functionalities, providing feedback on potential improvements and content organization. While the process largely followed a pre-agreed work plan, adaptations were made for participant availability, with, for example) autonomous and synchronous testing periods in Portugal (starting on 16th October 2024 and concluding on 17th October 2024).

Feedback, collected via questionnaires (translated into National languages), informed updates to the platform, achieving the objective of addressing user needs and enhancing usability.

1. Target Group Description

The target group for the Digital Stories platform testing consisted of a diverse array of participants, including 50 teachers from Turkey, Italy, Slovenia, and Portugal, as well as 25 prospective teachers from the Faculty of Education at Yildiz Technical University in Turkey. This composition ensured broad representation across different educational systems, levels, and cultural contexts.

The group of teachers was characterized by a significant female majority across all countries, reflecting the gender distribution typical of the teaching profession. In Turkey, 10 teachers from Bafra Kodlama Merkezi in Samsun participated, with a balanced representation of middle school (60%) and high school (40%) educators and a mixed-gender composition. Additionally, in Istanbul, 10 teachers from Fatih Atatürk Çağdaş Yaşam Çok Programlı Anadolu Lisesi and 1 from Eyüpsultan İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü participated, with 7 females and 4 males. In Italy, the testing group included 10 female teachers, mostly from secondary schools (90%), with a small representation from primary education (10%). Slovenian participants included 10 teachers (8 women and 2 men) from various institutions such as elementary schools, higher education faculties, and a national ICT services provider. Most Slovenian participants were affiliated with primary schools (60%), while 30% represented higher education and 10% secondary schools. In Portugal, the group consisted of 10 female teachers, primarily affiliated with A.E. Carlos Amarante, though some came from other basic and secondary schools in the network, and one from a higher education institution (UCP – Porto). Portuguese participants typically taught students in the third cycle of basic education (grades 7–9) and secondary school (grades 10–12), often covering multiple grades or cycles.

At Yildiz Technical University, the testing was conducted with 25 prospective teachers studying in the Faculty of Education. This group, composed of 60% females and 40% males, was specifically included to provide insights into the platform's effectiveness for teacher education. All participants were enrolled in programs focused on Turkish education.

Including participants from varied educational levels, institutions, and countries allowed for collecting comprehensive feedback, ensuring the platform's inclusivity and adaptability. This diverse target group played a crucial role in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, contributing significantly to developing a tool capable of addressing the needs of educators and students across different contexts.

2. Piloting Description

The piloting of the Digital Stories platform was a comprehensive process conducted in various formats across multiple locations, engaging participants in structured and interactive sessions to explore the platform's features, content, and applications. In Bafra, Fatih Atatürk and at At Yildiz Technical University, Turkey, the piloting lasted 10 hours over morning and afternoon sessions. The morning sessions introduced the project's aims, methodology, and modules, while the afternoons were dedicated to practical engagement with the platform, where participants completed modules and provided feedback through Google questionnaires. At Yildiz Technical University, prior to the sessions, participants explored the project website, registered on the platform, and received their credentials. In the afternoon, they were engaged with the platform's online training, asked questions as needed, and completed evaluations through a Google Form accessible via a QR code.
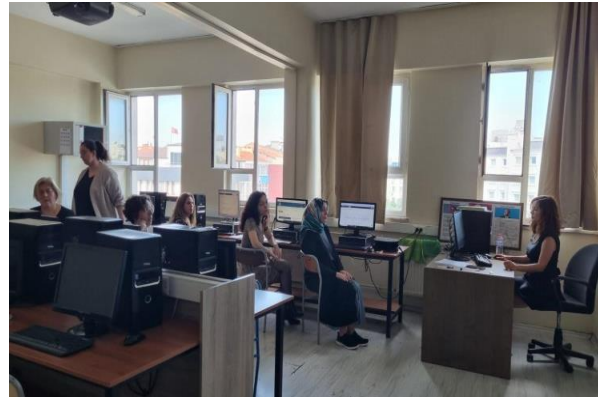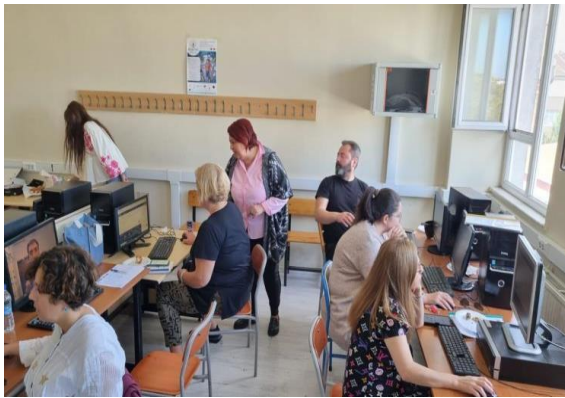

Figure n.1 – Piloting sessions at Fatih Atatürk Çağdaş Yaşam Çok Programlı Anadolu Lisesi, Turkey

Figure n.2 – Piloting sessions Bafra Kodlama Merkezi in Samsun, Turkey.

Figure n.3 – Piloting sessions at Yildiz Technical University, Turkey.

Similarly, in Italy, participants attended 10-hour sessions divided between theoretical presentations and hands-on platform testing, supported by distributed materials like a Teacher Training Handbook. Feedback was collected through translated questionnaires, and certificates were issued upon completion.

Figure n.4 – Piloting sessions at I.C. "Milani" Terracina, Italy.

In Slovenia, a two-week piloting period allowed teachers to explore the platform independently through an online Moodle classroom, culminating in an in-person session at the Faculty of Education to provide structured feedback and receive participation certificates. Portugal implemented a two-phase piloting strategy: participants first explored the platform and completed challenges independently using tools like Padlet to document their work, and

later convened online for a collaborative session to discuss insights, test functionalities, and present their digital storytelling exercises addressing educational challenges.

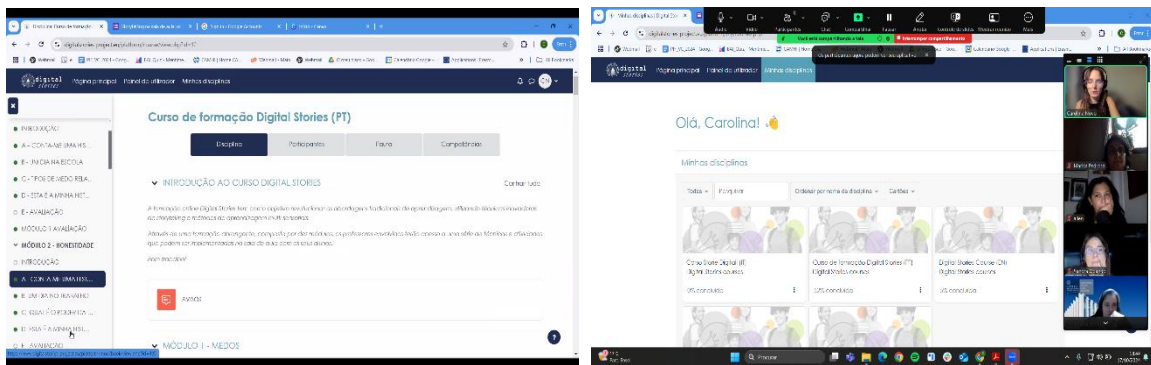**Figure n.5 – Padlet used in the piloting session in Portugal**

Figure n.6 – Piloting online sessions in Portugal

Across all settings, participants engaged with project materials, provided valuable feedback, and applied the tools to create educational content, highlighting the platform's practical utility and adaptability to diverse teaching environments.

Figure n.6 – Part of the materials delivered to the participants in the platform piloting sessions.

3. Analysis evaluation questionnaire

The evaluation questionnaires collected from the piloting of the Digital Stories platform provided a comprehensive understanding of participant feedback, highlighting widespread satisfaction with the platform's functionalities, usability, and content organization. The evaluation was typically divided into three key sections: general information about participants, functionality and accessibility of the platform, and organization and clarity of the content. Across all piloting sites, feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with most participants strongly agreeing or agreeing on the ease of access, intuitiveness of navigation, and clarity of instructional materials. Features such as the navigation videos, password recovery process, and logout functionality were particularly well-received. The left-side menu design was commended for being user-friendly, enhancing the overall navigation experience. However, there were minor areas for improvement, such as relocating the password change option from the Preferences section to privacy settings and simplifying direct platform access through a more visible link on the project's website.

Participants across multiple countries emphasized the coherence and utility of the platform's content organization. Elements like the e-course descriptions, clarity of learning objectives, and alignment of content with the project's methodology and pedagogical model received high ratings. Most feedback indicated that the content was not only well-structured but also effectively tailored to the educational objectives. In some instances, participants suggested minor adjustments to improve user experience, such as reorganizing materials to reduce the need for extensive navigation between sections and optimizing the display of learning objectives for better clarity. For example, in Slovenia, participants recommended limiting the visibility of specific content to relevant subpages to streamline the interface.

Open-ended feedback further underscored the platform's success. Teachers expressed appreciation for its creative design, practical applications, and alignment with their professional needs. Comments praised the platform as "very user-friendly" and "innovative," with many participants eager to integrate it into their teaching practice. A few constructive suggestions included linking referenced program logos within the modules, enabling a more flexible scoring system in evaluations, and enhancing progress tracking features. These insights, while minor, provided valuable guidance for refining the platform.

Notably, the content evaluation demonstrated consistency across regions, with participants rating the learning objectives and organizational structure as clear and useful. Specific examples of feedback from Padlet discussions highlighted teachers' enthusiasm for applying the platform in contexts such as combating student demotivation, fostering reading engagement, and addressing topics like migration and intercultural respect. Teachers valued the platform's ability to produce tangible, applicable teaching materials, reinforcing its relevance and practicality in classroom settings. The general sentiment reflected in participant comments, such as "excellent work" and "great tool," underscores the platform's success in meeting its educational goals.

Also, the students at Yildiz Technical University participating in the piloting phase provided largely positive feedback regarding the platform's access, navigation, and content organization. A significant number of users found accessing the platform easy, with 14 out of 25 participants stating that access was very easy and 10 stating it was easy. Only one participant had no opinion on platform access. The tutorial for registration, login, and password recovery was deemed helpful, with 88% of participants finding it useful. Additionally, 80% of participants reported that it was easy to recover their password when necessary.

The navigation tools were also well-received, with 96% of participants finding the platform easy to navigate and 92% appreciating the usability of the left-side menu. Regarding content, 80% of participants gave positive feedback, particularly about the clarity and effectiveness of the e-course explanations, with 88% finding them useful for the pilot testing activity. In terms of the module objectives, 92% of participants found them clear and understandable. Furthermore, 88% of participants felt the platform's content was well-organized, and 92% agreed that the content was aligned with the project's educational objectives and model. These responses indicate a strong satisfaction with both the usability and the educational value of the platform.

Overall, the evaluation process confirmed the Digital Stories platform's strong reception among educators, with high satisfaction ratings and positive qualitative feedback. While minor enhancements were suggested to further optimize usability and content delivery, the platform demonstrated its effectiveness as a user-friendly and pedagogically sound tool for digital storytelling in education. This comprehensive feedback provides a strong foundation

for future iterations, ensuring the platform remains aligned with teacher needs and classroom applications.

In summary, the findings collected are the following:

Strengths of the Platform:

1. **User-Friendliness**: High satisfaction with platform navigation, the left-side menu, and overall usability.

2. **Instructional Materials**: Clear and helpful navigation and password recovery videos were praised by a majority of participants.

3. **Content Organization**: Strong alignment of the content with project methodology, well-organized modules, and clear learning objectives.

4. **Practical Applicability**: Teachers found the platform highly applicable in classroom settings, particularly for promoting reading engagement and addressing diverse topics.

5. **Positive Feedback**: Enthusiastic comments from participants highlighted the platform's innovative design and practical relevance.

Areas of Improvement:

1. **Simplify Navigation**:
   o Reduce the number of clicks required to navigate between content sections.
   o Limit the visibility of learning objectives boxes to the "Preparation" subpage for clearer structure.

2. **Enhance Direct Access**:
   o Add a prominent registration button on the platform's main webpage.

3. **Evaluation System**:
   o Modify the scoring system to be out of 100 instead of 10 for greater clarity.
   o Include module-specific references in final evaluation questions for better engagement.

4. **Visual Adjustments**:
   o Implement a smaller, more intuitive print button in the upper corner of content sections.

5. **Additional Training**:

- o Provide extended training sessions for teachers unfamiliar with the platform, focusing on advanced functionalities.

4. *Improvements and Enhancements Based on User Feedback*

Based on feedback from the piloting testing in Turkey, Slovenia, Portugal, and Italy, several updates were made to the website and platform, including:

1. A direct link from the website to the platform via a dedicated button.
2. The connection to the registration form and two video tutorials on the platform's webpage.
3. Updates to the online training, with clear visibility of learning objectives, materials, duration, and digital tools for each phase of the 5E model before the description of the preparation activity in each module.
4. Refreshing of some links in the training courses.
5. Inclusion of references to corresponding modules in the final evaluation questionnaire for each online training course.

However, some suggestions, such as making the print button more visible or removing certain navigation buttons, were not implemented due to limitations in the selected template for managing the 5E model-based training.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Digital Stories platform has been widely appreciated across all evaluations, affirming its role as an accessible, intuitive, and pedagogically relevant tool for educators. Participants from diverse contexts consistently highlighted the platform's ease of use, practical design, and the applicability of its modules in real-world educational settings. Features such as intuitive navigation, clarity and usefulness of instructional videos, ease of password recovery, and the utility of the left-side menu were all seen as strengths. Feedback also emphasized the platform's alignment with teaching objectives and its capacity to address various educational levels and subjects, making it a highly adaptable tool for integrating storytelling into teaching practices.

The platform's content organization received significant praise, with participants appreciating the coherence between the layout, learning objectives, and project methodology. Teachers were satisfied with the clarity of the e-course descriptions and the well-structured materials, which they felt met both their pedagogical needs and their students' requirements. The platform's adaptability across multiple grade levels and subjects was also noted as a key factor in enhancing its relevance and utility in diverse educational environments. Importantly, the introduction of storytelling as a teaching strategy was considered a novel and engaging approach that many teachers had not previously considered but were eager to adopt.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, participants provided valuable suggestions to further enhance the platform, such as improving navigation to reduce excessive clicking, simplifying access to registration forms, and adjusting the organization of learning materials for smoother usability. In response, several updates were made to the platform and website: a direct link was added from the website to the platform, the registration form and video tutorials were placed on the platform's webpage, and updates were made to the online training to ensure clearer visibility of learning objectives, materials, duration, and digital tools for each phase of the 5E model. Additionally, some links were refreshed, and references to the corresponding modules were included in the final evaluation questionnaire. While certain suggestions, such as making the print button more visible or removing specific navigation buttons, were not feasible due to template limitations, these improvements demonstrate a commitment to optimizing the platform based on user feedback.

Overall, the Digital Stories platform is a highly effective, well-received educational tool with substantial potential to enrich teaching and learning practices. Its user-friendly design, clear objectives, and alignment with pedagogical goals make it a valuable resource for educators. The enthusiastic response to its innovative use of storytelling highlights its capacity to inspire and transform classroom engagement, marking it as a well-conceived project that bridges practical functionality with meaningful educational impact.