SMALL SCALE MEETINGS REPORT

EU-Track

Italy

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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Contents

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the small-scale meetings organized across Italy as part of the Digital Stories project initiative to develop a comprehensive recommendation program for educational policy and practice inside the project. The small Italian meetings, organized by the EU-Track multidisciplinary research centre, were integral to gathering insights and generating collaborative discussions with key stakeholders. These events aimed to bring together representatives from various sectors—universities, local educational administrations, entrepreneurs, teachers and parents—to address current educational challenges and propose actionable recommendations.

The small Italian meetings were part of a series held in each project partner country. The objective was to foster dialogue around essential topics, including educational improvement strategies, predicted content needs, and effective methods for developing a series of final recommendations based on the feedback and data collected. The following report details the small meeting outcomes organized in Italy.

2. Description of the Participants

Two small scale meetings were organized. The first was atteded by n. 24 people and the second one by n. 10 people. In total, the small scale meetings gathered n. 34 people.

We had principals, vice-principals, teachers taught different subjects like ICT, licterature, history, science, foreign language, etc. , some parents of students. All were interested in the storytelling approach.

3. Analysis of the Meeting

The meetings were organised as follows: the first at Primary School Giovanni Paolo II and the other one at I.C. Milani. Regarding the duration, each meeting lasted two hours. The first was organized in the farmework of the ErasmusDays 2024 week.

Both small meetings were started with a short presentation about the project and the modules and followed by a discussion with people partecipating. The participants were actively involved in the discussion which followed the structure of the questions privided.

3.1. Analysis: Storytelling and Digital Storytelling

Participants provided thoughtful insights into both traditional storytelling and digital storytelling, reflecting on the value, methods, and recommendations for the approach suggested with the Digital stories project. Many participants recognised storytelling as an effective tool, emphasizing its power to connect audiences with content on a deeper level. One participant noted, "Storytelling makes complex ideas more accessible and relatable," highlighting that when information is conveyed through narratives, it resonates more and is easier to remember, mainly if we talk about students.

In discussing digital storytelling specifically, participants recommended integrating digital tools to enhance engagement and accessibility. One participant observed, "Digital storytelling allows for a more interactive and immersive experience," underscoring how multimedia elements like video, sound, and graphics can enrich the storytelling process and capture diverse target groups. It can adapt the storytelling to the different special needs of the students by encouraging the various typologies of learning styles.

Regarding recommendations, participants suggested prioritizing authenticity and student engagement. "It's crucial that the story feels genuine and adherent to the student's interests," one participant explained, emphasizing that they are more likely to connect with authentic and transparent stories. Others encouraged the strategic use of artificial intelligence to reconstruct and develop stories, with one participant suggesting, "The artificial intelligence can help teachers develop more effective stories with learning objectives more evident."

Overall, participants endorsed storytelling and digital storytelling, recognizing their potential to simplify complex ideas, foster emotional connections, and reach a broader target group.

3.2. Analysis: Digitalization of Education

Participants expressed varied perspectives on the digitalization of education, noting its advantages and improvement areas, particularly for teachers and students. Many saw digitalization as a crucial step in innovating education; as one participant mentioned, "Digital tools make learning more flexible and accessible," pointing out that online resources and platforms allow students to learn at their own pace and revisit materials when necessary. This flexibility was highlighted as a key benefit, especially in supporting students who may struggle with traditional, one-size-fits-all teaching methods.

Teachers, however, noted some challenges with digitalization, especially regarding engagement and resource quality. As one teacher explained, "Simply transferring content online isn't enough; the materials need to be interactive and well-designed to engage students truly." This observation points to the importance of digitising educational content and enhancing its quality with multimedia tools, quizzes, and interactive elements that keep students interested and involved in their learning.

Recommendations for improving digitalization centred on better support and training for teachers. Several participants suggested more professional development focused on digital pedagogy, with one recommending, "Teachers need dedicated training to feel confident using new technology effectively." Enhanced support for teachers in this area could bridge the gap between traditional and digital methods, allowing educators to implement digital tools more comfortably and creatively.

For students, participants emphasized the need for improved digital literacy. "Students benefit most when they understand how to use digital resources responsibly," one participant noted, stressing the importance of teaching digital skills alongside academic/school content.

Overall, participants agreed that digitalization has the potential to enrich education but that its effectiveness depends on well-designed content, proper teacher training, and ongoing support for students as they adapt to an increasingly digital learning environment.

3.1. Analysis: Early School Leaving

Participants expressed significant concern about early school leaving, particularly in Italy, where it has been a persistent issue with far-reaching impacts on students, communities, and the broader economy. Italy has one of the highest early school leaving rates in Europe, and many participants emphasized the need for focused interventions to address the unique challenges Italian students face. As one participant described, early school leaving represents "a loss of potential," emphasizing that students who leave school prematurely miss opportunities for stable employment and personal growth.

The discussions highlighted Italy's regional disparities, noting that early school leaving is more prevalent in certain areas, particularly in the southern regions where economic struggles and limited educational resources exacerbate the issue. "In southern Italy, the lack of resources and extracurricular opportunities can make school less engaging for students," observed one participant, stressing the need for regionally targeted strategies that address these specific challenges.

To tackle early school leaving in Italy, participants recommended increased government investment in education, especially in economically disadvantaged areas. As one participant suggested, "A stronger commitment from the state to fund schools in vulnerable regions could make a big difference." By providing schools with more resources, they argued, Italy could reduce dropout rates by enhancing classroom engagement and supporting students' social and emotional needs.

Among the recommended teaching approaches, digital storytelling was highlighted as a particularly promising tool for engaging students and creating an inclusive learning environment. Digital storytelling combines traditional narrative with multimedia elements, allowing students to express themselves and interact with the curriculum in a personalized, relevant way. One participant noted, "Digital storytelling can make learning feel relevant and personal, which is crucial for students who may feel disconnected from traditional teaching methods." By empowering students to create their own stories—often related to course content or personal experiences—digital storytelling fosters a sense of accomplishment and ownership over learning, which can be crucial for students at risk of early school leaving.

This approach also aligns well with Italy's need for regional adaptability. Schools in under-resourced areas could leverage digital storytelling as a low-cost, impactful method to tailor lessons to local realities and engage students through relatable, real-world contexts. "When students see the impact of their learning on real issues, they become more engaged," one participant explained, underscoring that digital storytelling could help bridge the gap between academic content and students' everyday lives, particularly in areas where traditional resources may be scarce.

Participants also advocated for closer collaboration with families and local communities. "Involving families and local organizations helps create a support network around the student," noted one participant, adding that this could foster a more positive attitude toward education. Community partnerships, they suggested, could enrich digital storytelling projects, providing students with a broader support network and a vision for future education and career opportunities.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the small-scale meetings highlighted a strong interest and commitment from participants towards educational innovation, particularly through the approach of digital storytelling. The discussions emphasized both the advantages and challenges of digitalization in education, with a focus on the need for interactive content and proper teacher training to enhance the effectiveness of digital tools. There was also broad consensus on the importance of addressing early school leaving, particularly in disadvantaged regions, through targeted interventions and increased investment in schools. Digital storytelling was recognized as a promising tool for engaging students, personalizing learning, and tackling early dropout, due to its ability to create emotional connections and make learning more accessible and meaningful. Overall, the meetings underscored the importance of an educational approach that integrates digital resources, storytelling, and ongoing teacher development to meet students' needs, promoting an inclusive, motivating, and future-ready education.

SMALL SCALE MEETINGS REPORT

(Bafra MEM)

(Türkiye)

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

2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000087898

Contents

1. Introduction

This work was carried in order to complete the task which was proposed as one of the final products of our project. Small scale meeting was held so as to collect the necessary data for finalizing the Recommendation Letter. Bafra MEM completed this meeting on 15.10.2024 in Bafra Kodlama Merkezi facility.

2. Description of the Participants

The participants' profiles are school principals, vice principals, union representatives, Turkish teachers, literature teachers and IT teachers. There were 16 competent and experienced people in our small-scale meeting.

3. Analysis of the Meeting

This small sclae meeting was held in Bafra Kodlama Merkezi facility and it was organized by Bafra National Education Directorate on 15.10.2024.

With the participation of all stakeholders, the participants expressed their opinions on the project outputs. They reviewed the Digital Story platform, one of the most important outputs of the project, and made criticisms about the effectiveness and usability of the modules to be used.

3.1. Analysis: Storytelling and Digital Storytelling

They stated that integrating storytelling into lessons could be beneficial, that using this technique could be beneficial for students to develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards school, and that storytelling, especially in the teaching process, would make their professional lives easier for teachers.

They stated that although the use of storytelling in the teaching of lessons may partially extend the lesson time, it is still important because it can reduce the monotony and boredom of the lesson for students. Supporting the storytelling technique with modules in this way and presenting it to practice with the help of a digital platform provides ease of use for teachers and students and allows for long-term use.

3.2. Analysis: Digitalization of Education

They said they thought it was great that the platform was digital and all the materials were archived digitally. The fact that the platform can be used both in class and provides a certificate at the end of the training makes the project even more interesting and important.

3.1. Analysis: Early School Leaving

They stated that in an age where everything is designed in a digital order, the existence of such a platform in an education system consisting of books, boards and routine homework is very important. In the digital age we live in, the fact that students are supported in their learning processes in a digital way is very good news for them to get away from this boring environment and enter a more productive environment with more fun and age-appropriate activities.
This way, students can develop more positive attitudes towards school and their decision to leave school can change. This can help us teachers in taking precautions against early school leaving.

4. Conclusion

After a productive meeting, a certificate ceremony was held and certificates were given to the participants.

SMALL SCALE MEETINGS REPORT

Yildiz Technical University

Istanbul, Türkiye

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

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Contents

1. Introduction

Small-scale meetings for WP4 has been conducted at Yildiz Technical University, Türkiye with a variey of participants. This report is prepared to describe 2 small-scale meetings organized at Yildiz Technical University to reach the objectives of the WP4.

2. Description of the Participants

The participants of small-scale meetings included a variety of stakeholders in alignment with the work package objectives. Teachers, school principles, graduate students, and parents attended the small-scale meeting to increase the effectiveness of the project. Each meeting was carried out with 10 participants. Four of these participants were females while 6 of them were males. The occupation of the participants was mostly teachers, as the whole project is aimed at school cooperation with teachers in the center of focus. 8 participants were working as teachers, and 4 of them were also parents who have at least one child going to primary or secondary school. 1 participant was working as official at a educational institution while 1 was vice principal at a state school in Istanbul. All participants were graduate students studying Turkish Language Teaching at Yildiz Technical University, Istanbul.

3. Analysis of the Meeting

The meeting took place at the Faculty of Education, Yildiz Technical University on 25 and 26th November, 2024. The meetings took between 2 hours to 3 hours each. The same participants attend both meetings to increase the depth of the discussions. In each meeting, the questions prepared by YTU were directed to the participants and discussion was started. Each participant expressed their opinions on each question, giving examples from their experiences as teachers, parents, officials and principals. Two teachers had previous experience on school management and one teacher and expressed their opinions based on their experiences.

The first meeting started with Neslihan Karakuş's introduction and explanation of the project. She introduced how the project was conducted during almost 20 months, the activities and the general objectives of the project. Participants were intrigued into the project as their professional area was language teaching. They were eager to learn more about the project.

After the introduction of the project, Büşra Tombak İlhan introduced the modules and the platform to the participants. Two modules were applied interactively with the participants so that they could understand the structure of the teaching modules and their effectiveness. Also, participants were advised to enrol the platform so that they could be trained for the modules and use the resources in their profession.

Towards the end of the meeting, the modules and their effectiveness to increase the academic achievement were discussed. Participants eagerly answered the questions and explained their opinions and experiences in using storytelling and digital storytelling.

The first meeting is concluded with the discussion of storytelling techniques and methods that can be used in education. Participants explained their ideas, but they were not knowledged about the methods and techniques of storytelling. The meeting is concluded with a suggestion to search about storytelling methods and techniques before the next meeting.

The second meeting on November 26th was started by Neslihan Karakuş with questions about storytelling. Participants and Neslihan discussed how storytelling and digital storytelling could be enhanced in classrooms. Then, a

discussion on the techniques and methods of storytelling and digital storytelling started. The participants were eager to participate and share their opinions.

The second meeting went on discussion the objective of decreasing early school leaving. Büşra Tombak İlhan explained statistics of early school leaving in Türkiye. They listed the reasons of early school leaving and started to discuss how the project can contribute to decreasing early school leaving. Participants were more eager to talk on this subject and shared their experiences and insights on early school leaving. They mentioned outer factors than school while discussion early school leaving.

3.1. Analysis: Storytelling and Digital Storytelling

Storytelling is one of the most fundamental methods used in Turkish language teaching. Participants were intrigued in storytelling and digital storytelling as they were introduced through the modules and the platform of the project.

One of the first things that participants drew attention to was that storytelling is very popular among Turkish teachers and learners. One of the participants explained: *"It is very popular these days. We see many posts on social media and even at private schools. They use storytelling. They even have*

courses for storytelling for teachers and parents". Storytelling is widely used at schools and other educational activities at museums, NGOs, and other places that organize activities for children or adults. As another participant added *"Stories are universal and they can go as deep as you want to take them. So, they can be used for any reason, and they are fundamental in Turkish courses".*

Stories include the basic themes, characters and moral messages for every age, gender and culture. Thus, they are used for a variety of reasons. However, the participants stated that they are fundamental sources for Turkish courses. They explained that stories are intriguing, motivating and basic for language courses. They include a variety of vocabulary, from basic ones to high-level. One of the participants explained *"We use stories in primary school, and we are graduate students now and we are still learning stories. I think the best advantage is that you can use them for any level. You can even use the same story for different levels by changing the level of the activities."* The universality of the stories make them usable for many levels in education. By changing the pre and post activities of stories, they can be adapted to different levels and aims in education.

In the second meeting, the participants were asked to review the storytelling methods and techniques. After using the modules in the platform, they stated that they saw different methods of storytelling as developing contrasts, narrative technique, listening to the story, starting with a personal story, using AI in storytelling, story and the environment, and developing characters. Among these methods, one participant said that he *"find AI technique the most as it is digital and students like those kind of techniques".* Also, another participant stated *"I think personal story would be very effective in the classroom as it is both easy to do and would motivate students. They like to hear personal about the teacher."* Also, they found the environmental activities in Module 9 very effective as they are related with the environment, they integrate digital tools and compatible with green skills.

Another advantage of the project, to the participants' viewpoints, was the digitalization of each module and their materials. One participant said *"Students are all about digital now. When you do something with computer or on smart board, they are into it. So, I think digital storytelling would be very effective in lessons. It can even replace traditional storytelling in the future."* Another participant joined the discussion of digital storytelling and added *"we*

are using digital books, listen to them on our phones or computers. Why not use digital storytelling in education? I think it will be very effective."

Another point significant in the small-scale meetings was the use of stories and storytelling in the national curriculum of Türkiye. Participants drew attention to the current curriculum of Turkish Ministry of Education and said *"The Ministry of Education announced the stories that could be used in courses now. They encourage teachers to use stories in different courses, especially for moral education."* They explained how the project was in alignment with the objectives of the national education in Türkiye and went on *"it is very easy to use these modules, actually. I think anyone could use them in their courses, at least in Türkiye."* The similarity of Turkish national education and the project in terms of objectives is hypothesised to increase the usability of the modules in courses.

3.2. Analysis: Digitalization of Education

The Covid-19 pandemic created a big shift in almost every institution, including education. Most public places needed to be sterilized and distance was required between people. Schools were one of the most affected institutions from the Covid-19 pandemic, as they were closed in almost every country and distant education was pursued. Being caught for a requirement of distant and digital education, most schools, countries and universities realized that they lacked the digital skills. A lot of schools and universities worldwide used digital tools that enabled students and teachers meet in digital platform and continue education.

Although digital skills were listed among the required skills of the 21st century before pandemic, people realized the vital importance of digital skills and digitalization of education by experience. Thus, one of the objectives of this project is to contribute to the digitalization of education, through storytelling. When participants were asked for their opinions about digitalization of education, most of them referred to the pandemic. One participant said *"We realized how important digital skills were in the pandemic. We were all very inexperienced and unknowledged about the digital education. Then we learned Zoom, Teams and other tools."*

One of the advantages of digital education is that it makes sharing good sources, materials and experiences with students, teachers or schools far. It contributes to equal opportunities by eliminating the difficulties of geography.

One of the participants explained *"It can make sharing easier. You do something good, prepare a good material maybe and upload it to the Internet. People from far far away can reach them and use them, without even knowing you."* However, another participant said *"But we experienced inequalities in the time of pandemic as not every student had the Internet or enough number of technological devices in their houses."* In fact, the statement was true as digital education both contributes to and harm equal opportunities as users need technological devices, the Internet, and fast connection to watch, download or upload materials.

In terms of using digital resources in courses, most teachers stated that they would like to use digital sources and tools, but they do not have enough time to search for these materials or tools before the classes. They said time pressure was strict and using digital tools would extend the time allocated for the topics. One participant explained *"I used to use Kahoot, for example. But you open the computer, students go to the link, etc. It takes a lot of time. Then, I need to rush in other classes."* Another participant said *"I actually like digital tools, but I don't know them. I need to use them to learn, but I cannot use them because I don't know."* This wishes circle of not using digital tools in courses because of not knowing them could be broken with this project as it includes a variety of digital tools. One participant said *"I saw the tutorial kind of parts in the modules about digital tools. They are prepared step by step and effective. I think I can use storyboard, for example."* This statement of the participant showed that the project could be effective in contributing to teachers' professional development in terms of digital skills and digitalization of education by providing necessary information about digital tools that teachers can use in their courses.

During the discussion, one of the participants said *"We were not taught for digital tools at university, neither when we became teachers. I think universities should offer courses for digitalization of education."* As this project aimed at contributing to teachers' professional development in terms of storytelling and digitalization of education, it can be expressed that the project aims to fill in this gap. Most teachers graduated from university without taking a lesson on digitalization of education. Thus, in-service education need to be offered for digitalization of education. This project aims to fill in this gap in the practice of education. Also, this offer of the participant is considered

significant, as it goes one step further for future projects for higher education cooperation for digitalization of education.

3.1. Analysis: Early School Leaving

Another objective of this project was to contribute to the decrease of early school leaving through digital storytelling. When teachers were asked about their opinions on storytelling, they were reluctant to share their ideas first. After a warm-up by Neslihan Karakuş and Büşra Tombak İlhan, they started to share their ideas and experiences.

Early school leaving is a significant problem in Turkish education system. The rate of early school leaving is determined as 40% by OECD. When this rate is shared with the participants, they were triggered and started to share their opinions. One of the participants expressed *"We have some students, I think they mostly work. They need to earn money, their parents are poor and they drop out of school."* After this comment, another participant explained *"They are not sure what the school will bring them. They are afraid that they would be unemployed after they graduate. They see no point I guess."* Participants went on talking about the economic reasons of early school leaving. They explained the uncertainty of school diploma in creating an economic advantage.

While the economic reasons were discussed in the meeting, participants drew attention to the social media. They explained students see people with no degrees telling how they earn a lot of money by posting on social media, creating digital contents. One participant said *"Students see their clothes, cars and houses. They are rich and they don't go to school, they didn't finish college. They are affected, they want to be one of them."* For the economic reasons of early school leaving, one participant explained *"this project cannot help to decrease the numbers of early school leaving unless it creates job opportunities."* The macro reason of early school leaving, economic reasons, cannot be handled through this project in short term.

Although the project was found short in effectiveness for solving macro economical conditions, a participant said it would increase student motivation and improve school belonging. He said *"The modules are mostly affectional. They encourage teacher-student and student-student dialogues. I think they can create bonds through the modules. Once the student feels he belongs to school, he wouldn't drop it I guess."* The affectional objectives are found effective in terms of decreasing early school leaving as they would contribute to the feeling

of school belonging, interpersonal relationships, and academic achievement. Another participant outlined *"The modules would help to improve basic skills. Reading, expressing oneself, and writing of course. Once students are good at these skills, their academic achievement will be better. And once they are successful, they wouldn't drop out of school."*

Another advantage of the project in decreasing early school leaving is outlined as using the stories. Participants expressed that stories are good tools to teach morals, improve behavioural skills and interpersonal skills. One participant said *"When honesty, friendship, school loving is taught to students through these modules, they would actually like school and they wouldn't drop it."* However, another participant expressed that it is a long way and it may not be achieved only through the modules. As early school leaving is a complicated problem to be solved, the modules only may be insufficient in solving this problem. However, raising awareness of teachers in terms of early school leaving would contribute to their attitudes and behaviours in terms of preventing early school leaving and creating a positive school atmosphere.

4. Conclusion

The project and the modules were mostly found effective in reaching the project objectives. In terms of storytelling, digital storytelling and digitalization of education, participants were mostly positive about the possible effect of the project. They mentioned time constraints might be a disadvantage in using all the modules, and digitalization of education. However, they mentioned storytelling and digital storytelling would improve students' basic skills and academic achievement. Also, they mentioned they would improve students' motivation.

In terms of digitalization of education, most participants referred to the significance of digitalization and digital skills in education. However, they explained they needed to learn digital tools and improve their digital skills. They expressed that the modules and digital tool tutorials would help them improve their digital skills, and the digital platform of the project would contribute to the digitalization of education.

For early school leaving, participants were hopeful but not sure about the possible effects. They mentioned the affectional objectives and interpersonal activities would contribute to prevent early school leaving. However, they were concerned about the economical reasons of early school leaving, about which

the project would be ineffective. Yet, they were hopeful of the digitalization, academic achievement, motivational and moral contributions of the project and they expressed it might contribute to prevent early school leaving.

SMALL SCALE MEETINGS REPORT

Virtual Campus

Portugal

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

2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000087898

Contents

1. Introduction

This report is a deliverable of Work Package 4 (WP4) of the project Digital Stories entitled *"Recommendation Program" to Promote Digital Storytelling Techniques".* The activity focuses on organising two small-scale meetings with stakeholders representatives to develop a recommendation framework. This framework encompasses the design of a digital storytelling curriculum, along with innovative techniques and actionable recommendations to be shared with decision-makers, stakeholders, and the target audience.

The first session, hosted by Virtual Campus in Portugal, was conducted online via Google Meet on the 19th of November 2024.

2. Description of the Participants

The first small-scale meeting was attended by a total of 17 participants (including 2 representatives from Virtual Campus). However, only 9 participants signed the digital attendance sheet. All 15 attendees were educators from primary and secondary schools, and their professional profiles reflected a strong focus on teaching and education, contributing valuable insights and practical perspectives to the discussion.

The attendees represented a diverse range of experiences and expertise in pedagogy, making their contributions essential for shaping the storytelling curriculum and recommendations.
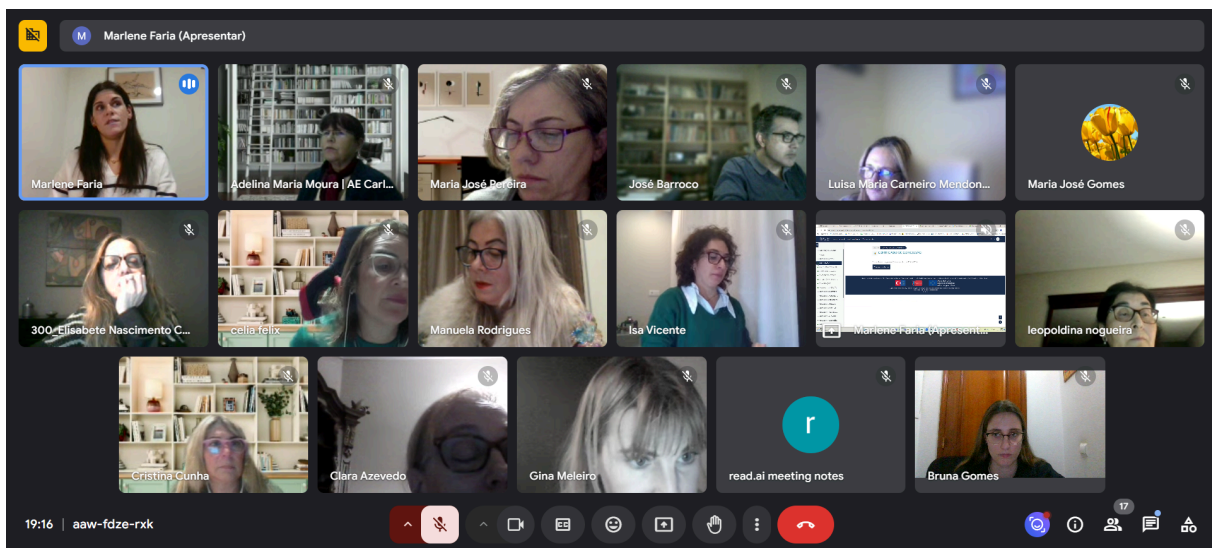
3. Analysis of the Meeting

The meeting took place online on the 19th of November 2024, using the Google Meet platform. The virtual format allowed for seamless participation from all 15 attendees, who were primary and secondary school teachers.

The session began with an introduction to the concept of storytelling, followed by a detailed presentation of the Digital Stories project. This included an overview of its objectives, the storytelling

techniques and lastly the results, specifically the "Digital Storytelling Techniques" Training Programme, and a practical demonstration of the Online interactive learning/teaching platform.
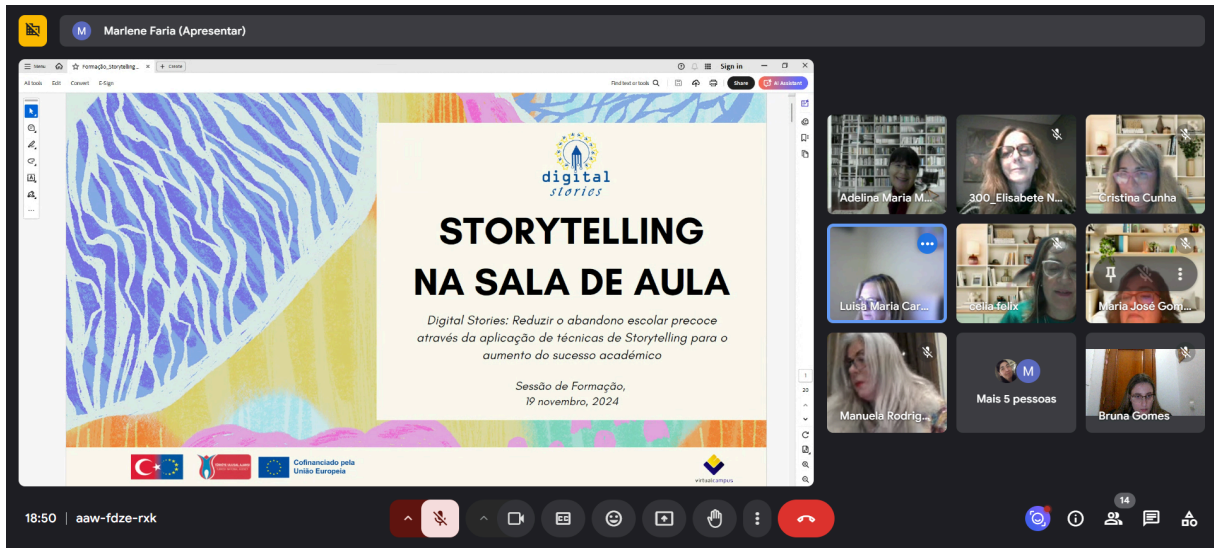
As the session progressed, an interactive discussion was held using the Miro platform, where participants enthusiastically shared their experiences and perspectives on incorporating storytelling into educational practices. The teachers actively engaged in the conversation, offering ideas and providing constructive feedback on the proposed questions.
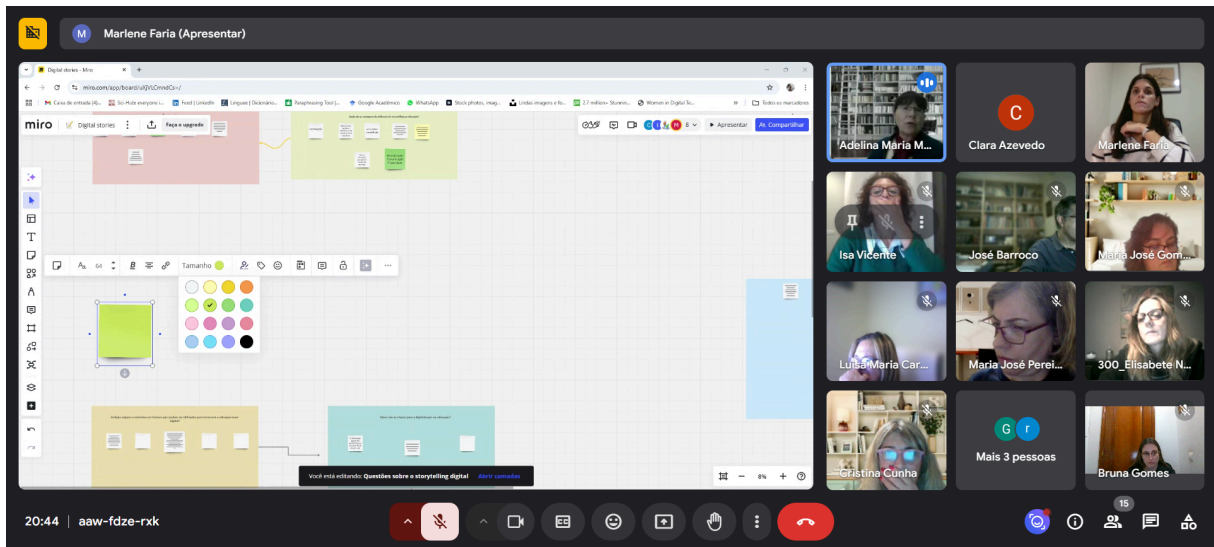
Breakout discussions enabled deeper exploration of specific topics, ensuring all participants had an opportunity to voice their thoughts. The level of interaction and enthusiasm demonstrated their commitment to the project's goals and enriched the collaborative process.

In the end, all participants received a certificate for their participation in the 1st small-scale meeting.

3.1. Analysis: Storytelling and Digital Storytelling

Participants provided varied insights and recommendations regarding the use of storytelling and digital storytelling in education, emphasizing their benefits, challenges, and potential applications.

Most participants recommended storytelling, highlighting its ability to develop essential skills such as communication, argumentation, and organization of ideas. One participant noted that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) indirectly supports storytelling in language teaching. Another emphasized that communicative competence is crucial, stating: *"When teaching a language, reading and understanding texts, talking about oneself and the world around you, and giving opinions is an essential requirement."*

While storytelling is not necessarily mandated by the Portuguese educational frameworks, some teachers incorporate it into their lessons to make the material more compelling. As one participant noted, storytelling *"helps students understand the purpose of the lessons"* and *"captures students' attention more easily"*, making it an effective method for maintaining interest and promoting empathy with the characters or themes being explored.

The advantages of storytelling were widely recognized, including its ability to enhance memorization, motivation, creativity, and engagement. Participants mentioned its effectiveness in illustrating complex concepts, reinforcing values, and promoting artistic expression. One participant remarked, *"Storytelling makes it easier to absorb the content taught in class"*, while another described it as *"a real art, and human beings have always been attracted to art"*.

In terms of recommendations, participants advised that storytelling should be adapted to suit the age and interests of students, with one suggesting that teachers *"create a library of narrative content for the whole school year"* and *"encourage students to create storyboards to reinforce their learning"*.

Although some participants reported using storytelling techniques, such as building stories with vocabulary words or using themed cubes, others admitted limited or no usage, especially in digital formats. Participants recommended employing storytelling to address abstract themes, facilitate expression, and enrich vocabulary, suggesting that linking concepts to everyday situations could improve comprehension and retention.

Digital storytelling was noted for its potential to engage students through multimedia elements such as images and sound. One participant observed: *"Digital storytelling has everything it takes to work well! Students like and need images to process information"*. It was also highlighted that digital storytelling develops additional skills and makes lessons more attractive to students.

Despite these advantages, digital storytelling was reported as underutilized, with participants citing a lack of training, time constraints, and limited technological resources. One participant commented, *"I don't think it's widely used yet, but I have created a digital book with a PLNM class"*. Another remarked, *"Those who know these strategies could be applying them"*, pointing to a knowledge gap among educators.

The advantages of digital storytelling included greater involvement, motivation, and enhanced understanding, while disadvantages such as bias, distraction from objectives, and time-intensive preparation were flagged. One participant noted, *"Preparation requires mastery of digital skills, platforms, and tools, and this can be demanding for teachers."*.

Participants stressed the need for training to familiarize teachers with digital storytelling tools and techniques. One stated, *"There should be training for this technique. It is one of many methodologies that can support student success"*. Participants recommended that digital storytelling be integrated gradually and complementarily into teaching, particularly as a tool to support the content being taught. And, suggested using digital storytelling selectively, when resources are available, and aligning themes with learning objectives to maximize its effectiveness.

In summary, participants strongly recommended incorporating storytelling and digital storytelling into education, recognizing their potential to enhance engagement, comprehension, and creativity. However, they underscored the importance of addressing challenges such as training, resource availability, and preparation time to ensure successful implementation.

3.2. Analysis: Digitalization of Education

Regarding the digitalization of education, participants emphasized the importance of diverse methods, proper training, and adequate resources to create an inclusive and effective learning environment.

Digitalization was viewed as a necessary step in modernizing education, with participants suggesting methods and techniques that prioritize active and inclusive learning. They highlighted the importance of methodologies such as cooperative learning, project-based learning, hybrid models, and the flipped classroom. As one participant explained, *"The methods and techniques should be as diverse as possible; inclusive; cooperative; making the student the center; autonomous".* This approach, which promotes active learning and student autonomy, was viewed as essential for increasing the use of digital sources.

To make education more digital, participants recommended adopting a range of active and hybrid methodologies. These include techniques such as the flipped classroom, where students study content at home using digital resources and then use class time for practical activities and discussions. One participant mentioned the flipped classroom as a method where *"students study the content at home using digital materials and use class time for practical activities and discussions".* Additionally, participants highlighted project-based learning, which involves students working in groups to solve complex problems using digital tools for research, collaboration, and presentation. Another suggested using station rotations, which divide the classroom into stations for online and offline activities, promoting varied learning styles.

Gamification, the integration of game-like elements into learning, was another method discussed as a way to increase student engagement and motivation. The use of interactive whiteboards, digital content creation through blogging and podcasts, and video conferences with external speakers were also suggested as practical ways to bring digital tools into the classroom. One participant emphasized the importance of using "interactive tools" to engage students effectively. Overall, there was a strong consensus that digital tools should not just be used as supplementary resources, but as integral components of the learning experience.

As for the steps towards digitalization in education, participants stressed the importance of teacher training in digital platforms and tools. They noted that *"digital training of teachers within these platforms"* is crucial for effective implementation. There was also a strong emphasis on the need for schools to be equipped with the proper technological infrastructure, such as adequate internet speed and digital media. One participant pointed out, *"Equipping schools with the technological means and Internet speed required for all students to use digital tools in the classroom"* as a fundamental step.

Additionally, the evaluation of existing technological infrastructure, selection of appropriate tools and platforms, and gradual implementation of digital strategies were seen as essential steps in the digitalization process. Continuous feedback and adjustments to these strategies were also recommended to ensure their effectiveness in the long term.

Regarding the types of digital tools that could be used in education, participants suggested a variety of options, with a particular focus on interactive tools. Popular choices included learning management systems (LMS) such as Moodle or Google Classroom, content creation platforms like Canva and Adobe Spark, and quiz and assessment tools like Kahoot or Quizizz. Tools for collaboration, such as Padlet and Edpuzzle, were also noted for their ability to foster engagement and cooperation among students.

In conclusion, participants recognized the growing importance of digital tools in education and highlighted the need for a comprehensive, inclusive approach to digitalization. They recommended that digitalization be implemented gradually, with a focus on teacher training, the provision of adequate technological resources, and the adoption of interactive and student-centered methods. By doing so, they believe that education can become more engaging, dynamic, and effective in meeting the needs of today's learners.

3.3. Analysis: Early School Leaving

On the matter of early school leaving, participants discussed how digital storytelling could play a pivotal role in addressing this challenge, even though this might not currently be the case in Portugal.

Digital storytelling was highlighted as an effective tool to combat early school leaving by fostering engagement and motivation. Participants emphasized that making lessons more attractive and dynamic, with students actively participating in creative and meaningful tasks, could "hold" their attention and increase their investment in the educational process. One participant note:, *"Through motivation, making lessons more attractive, dynamic, where students play an active role and with attractive tasks, it is possible to hold the attention of the school public."*

The technique was also praised for giving students their own "voice," allowing them to share their experiences, ideas, and perspectives. This empowerment helps create a sense of belonging and mutual support, particularly for students who might feel marginalized or disconnected from traditional educational approaches. A participant explained, *"Digital storytelling offers students a platform to express their own experiences, ideas, and perspectives. By having a voice through their stories, students feel more valued and empowered."*

Tailoring activities to students' interests and preferences was another key recommendation. Participants noted that the variety of modules and activities offered through digital storytelling could cater to individual tastes, thereby increasing engagement and reducing the likelihood of dropouts. One participant observed that, *"The suggested activities are tailored to the students' tastes. Through motivation, the sharing of opinions, and the active voice and involvement of the students, it is hoped that the dropout rate will be reduced."*

Additionally, participants highlighted the emotional and relational dimensions of digital storytelling, as it often involves themes of affection and the exploration of meaningful topics. This approach can resonate with students on a personal level, encouraging them to remain in school. As one participant stated, *"Since the strategies used are more engaging and deal with themes related to affection and the exploration of important subjects, it will be possible to avoid school drop-outs."*

Participants expressed hope that digital story use could be expanded as part of a broader strategy to prevent early school leaving. As one participant concluded, *"Storytelling, particularly in its digital dimension, enriches the teaching and learning process due to its high potential for creating a more motivating, dynamic and inclusive learning environment, which can help reduce school drop-outs and better prepare students to face the challenges of the 21st century.".*

In summary, participants saw digital storytelling as a powerful approach to preventing early school leaving by enhancing student motivation, creating a sense of community, and empowering students to express themselves. By making education more personalized, engaging, and emotionally relevant, digital storytelling can help address the underlying causes of disengagement and encourage students to stay in school.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussions and insights gathered from the participants during this session underscore the significant potential of storytelling and digital storytelling in enhancing educational practices. While digitalization and innovative methodologies like storytelling can offer engaging, motivating, and personalized learning experiences, the successful implementation of these techniques hinges on addressing key challenges such as teacher training, technological infrastructure, and the time required for preparation.

Participants recognized that digital storytelling can particularly play a vital role in preventing early school leaving by fostering a sense of community, giving students a voice, and making lessons more engaging and relevant to their lives. However, there was also an acknowledgment that, while these approaches show promise, they are not yet widely applied, especially in Portugal, due to gaps in resources and training.

Overall, the integration of digital tools and storytelling methods presents a valuable opportunity to improve student engagement, reduce dropout rates, and enhance learning outcomes. Moving forward, it is crucial to focus on providing the necessary resources, training, and support to educators, ensuring that digital storytelling can reach its full potential in enriching the educational experience for all students.

SMALL SCALE MEETINGS REPORT

Virtual Campus

Portugal

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

2022-1-TR01-KA220-SCH-000087898

Contents

1. Introduction

This report is a deliverable of Work Package 4 (WP4) of the project Digital Stories entitled *"Recommendation Program" to Promote Digital Storytelling Techniques".* The activity focuses on organising two small-scale meetings with stakeholders representatives to develop a recommendation framework. This framework encompasses the design of a digital storytelling curriculum, along with innovative techniques and actionable recommendations to be shared with decision-makers, stakeholders, and the target audience.

The second session organised by Virtual Campus and held at Escola Secundária Alberto Sampaio in Braga, Portugal, took place on the 26th of November 2024, prior to the Multiplier Event (ME) scheduled for the same day.

2. Description of the Participants

The 2nd small-scale meeting was attended by a total of 29 participants who joined the 1 hour meeting that preceded the ME, all of whom were educators from primary and secondary schools. Their professional profiles highlighted a strong focus on teaching and education, bringing valuable insights and practical perspectives to the discussion.

The diverse range of experiences and expertise in pedagogy among the attendees played a key role in shaping the digital storytelling curriculum and formulating relevant recommendations.

3. Analysis of the Meeting

The second session's aim was to gather recommendations for promoting learning methods through digital storytelling. To set the stage, we provided an introductory overview of the three main topics for discussion: the use of storytelling, the digitalization of education, and early school leaving.

Then, we proceed with an interactive discussion using the Mentimeter platform, where participants enthusiastically shared their experiences and perspectives on incorporating storytelling into educational practices. The teachers actively engaged in the conversation, offering ideas and providing constructive feedback on the proposed questions.
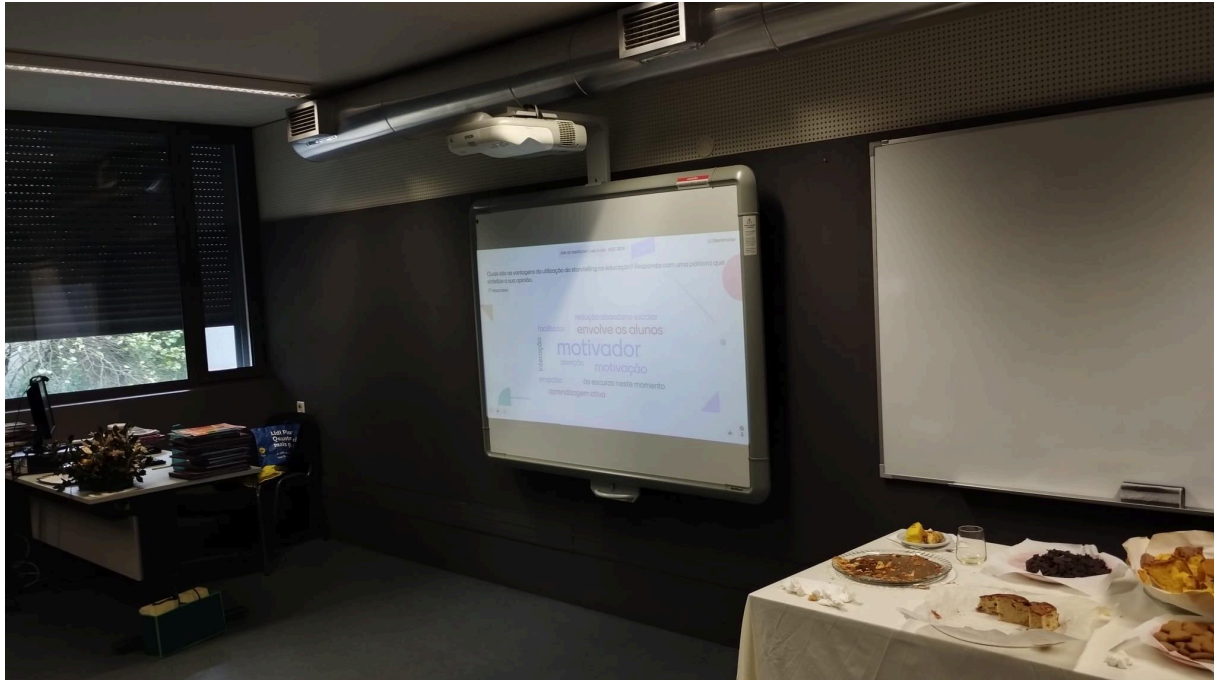
In the end, all participants received a certificate for their participation in the 2nd small-scale meeting.

3.1. Analysis: Storytelling and Digital Storytelling

Based on the participants' responses, storytelling, both traditional and digital, is recognized as a valuable educational tool, though there is some ambiguity and variation in how it should be implemented. Many participants appreciate storytelling for its ability to engage students actively, motivate them, and foster empathy. One participant highlighted storytelling as a way of *"motivating students"* and another referred to it as a *"fantastic way of developing narrative skills and oral comprehension and expression".* The benefits of storytelling are often connected to increased student interaction and attention, with terms like "*active learning*", "*interaction*", and "*attention*" emerging frequently in the answers.

However, the responses also reveal some concerns. Disadvantages of storytelling include "*lack of focus*", "*time*", and "*lack of digital skills*" by the teachers. Additionally, there are challenges related to infrastructure, such as "*poor internet*" and "*lack of equipment*", especially in the context of digital storytelling. Digital storytelling is perceived to require additional resources, with one participant remarking that it is "*more appealing to students*" but "*digital is tempting*", signaling a need for caution and proper integration into educational practices.

Regarding how storytelling should be used, there is a consensus that it should be used in moderation and contextually. Suggestions include integrating it as a tool for motivation and engaging students but ensuring it is contextualized in relation to the subjects being taught. One participant stated that storytelling should be "*articulated*" and "*contextualized in the themes and with guidance from the teacher*". This shows a preference for a structured, intentional approach to using storytelling in education.

3.2. Analysis: Digitalization of Education

Digitalization of education is seen by participants as a necessary but challenging development. While there is recognition of the importance of integrating digital tools, responses indicate that the process is not yet fully optimized. The need for digital storytelling in education is acknowledged, but the extent of its use is currently limited. In the responses, it is evident that many teachers do not frequently use digital storytelling methods, with a majority indicating that it is either "*very little used*" or "*little used*" in their classrooms. One participant noted that digital storytelling is "*more motivating and will therefore develop media and information literacy skills*", which suggests its potential to enrich students' digital literacy.

For digital education to be enhanced, several steps are recommended. First, investment in infrastructure is seen as essential, as indicated by responses like "*Powerful internet and good resources*" and "*Investment in infrastructure*". Moreover, there is a call for changing mentalities and adopting more active and digital educational methodologies. A suggestion for more effective digitization includes "*using digital platforms*" and embracing "*active methodologies*" such as "*gamification*" and "*inverted classroom*". These responses reflect an understanding that digitalization requires not just tools but also a shift in teaching approaches and mindsets.

Despite the potential advantages, the process of digitalization is not without its barriers. Participants mention "*poor internet access*", "*lack of equipment*", and "*lack of digital skills*" as obstacles to the successful integration of digital tools. There is also a need for proper teacher training, as one response indicated frustration with current training methods: "*training is not very effective*".

3.3. Analysis: Early School Leaving

While early school leaving is a serious concern in many educational contexts, it is not as prevalent in the Portuguese reality. Nonetheless, many participants view storytelling, especially digital storytelling, as a potential solution to engage students and prevent disengagement. The responses suggest that storytelling can be an effective tool for reducing dropout rates and motivating students. Terms like "*reduced school dropout*" and "*motivator*" were mentioned, indicating that storytelling is seen as a way to keep students interested and invested in their learning.

Participants emphasized that integrating storytelling into education could be particularly beneficial in fostering student involvement and making lessons more engaging. One respondent highlighted that storytelling is "a fantastic way of developing narrative skills" and could be used to "motivate students", which in turn could help prevent disengagement. This suggests that storytelling can act as a powerful tool to enhance student engagement, even in cases where early school leaving is not yet a widespread problem.

In terms of broader recommendations for addressing school leaving, there is a clear preference for making the learning experience more dynamic and student-centered. Several participants mentioned the need for "*active methodologies*", such as "*using digital platforms*", "*gamification*", and "*inverted*

classrooms", all of which are strategies that could be complemented by storytelling to make education more appealing. However, participants also acknowledged challenges and barriers that need to be addressed in order to successfully integrate digital storytelling into education.

In summary, while early school leaving is less of an issue in Portugal, participants recognize that storytelling, particularly digital storytelling, can play an important role in enhancing student motivation and engagement. By addressing infrastructural and resource challenges, storytelling could be a valuable tool in further strengthening the educational experience and preventing potential future disengagement. The participants' recommendations for preventing early school leaving include making the curriculum more engaging and student-centered.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the participants highlight the growing recognition of storytelling, particularly digital storytelling, as a valuable tool in education. Storytelling fosters active learning, engagement, and empathy, and is seen as an effective way to motivate students and develop key skills such as narrative competence and oral expression. However, challenges such as lack of resources, digital skills, and inadequate infrastructure, especially regarding internet access and equipment, remain barriers to the widespread adoption of digital storytelling in the classroom.

While early school leaving is not a significant concern in the Portuguese context, many participants identified storytelling as a potential strategy to prevent disengagement and reduce dropout rates. By integrating storytelling into the curriculum, educators can create a more engaging and dynamic learning environment, helping students stay connected to their education.

The digitalization of education holds great promise, but the process must be accompanied by substantial investments in infrastructure and teacher training. Recommendations for enhancing digitalization include the use of digital platforms, active methodologies, and innovative teaching practices such as gamification and flipped classrooms. Ultimately, to fully harness the benefits of storytelling and digital tools in education, a more holistic approach that includes better resources, ongoing professional development, and a shift in teaching methodologies is necessary.

SMALL SCALE MEETINGS 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

Contents

1. Introduction

As part of the project tasks, we organised and carried out 2 small scale meetings with different stakeholders. In this document, we describe who participated in the meetings, when and where we held the meetings and what answers we received from the participants to the questions about storytelling, digital storytelling, digitalization of education and early school leaving.

2. Description of the Participants

Participants were members of different stakeholder groups, such as policy makers, educators, teachers from primary and high schools, university teachers and researchers, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGO) and entrepreneurs from small and medium-sized enterprises (SME).

3. Analysis of the Meeting

Both small scale meetings were organised in November 2024. The first small scale meeting was held in Ljubljana at the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana and was attended by 15 participants. We presented the project and its results and impacts to the participants. Then we showed them the online platform and the modules we have developed. This presentation was followed by a group discussion to gather participants' opinions and views on storytelling and digital storytelling in education, digitalisation in education, the use of digital tools in education and about the prevention of early school leaving through digital storytelling. Participants actively participated in the review of the platform and modules and gave us feedback on the usability and quality of the materials, the efficiency of the platform and the intuitiveness of its use. They showed an even higher level of activity when answering questions in the group discussion, where they expressed their opinions, views, observations, and suggestions.
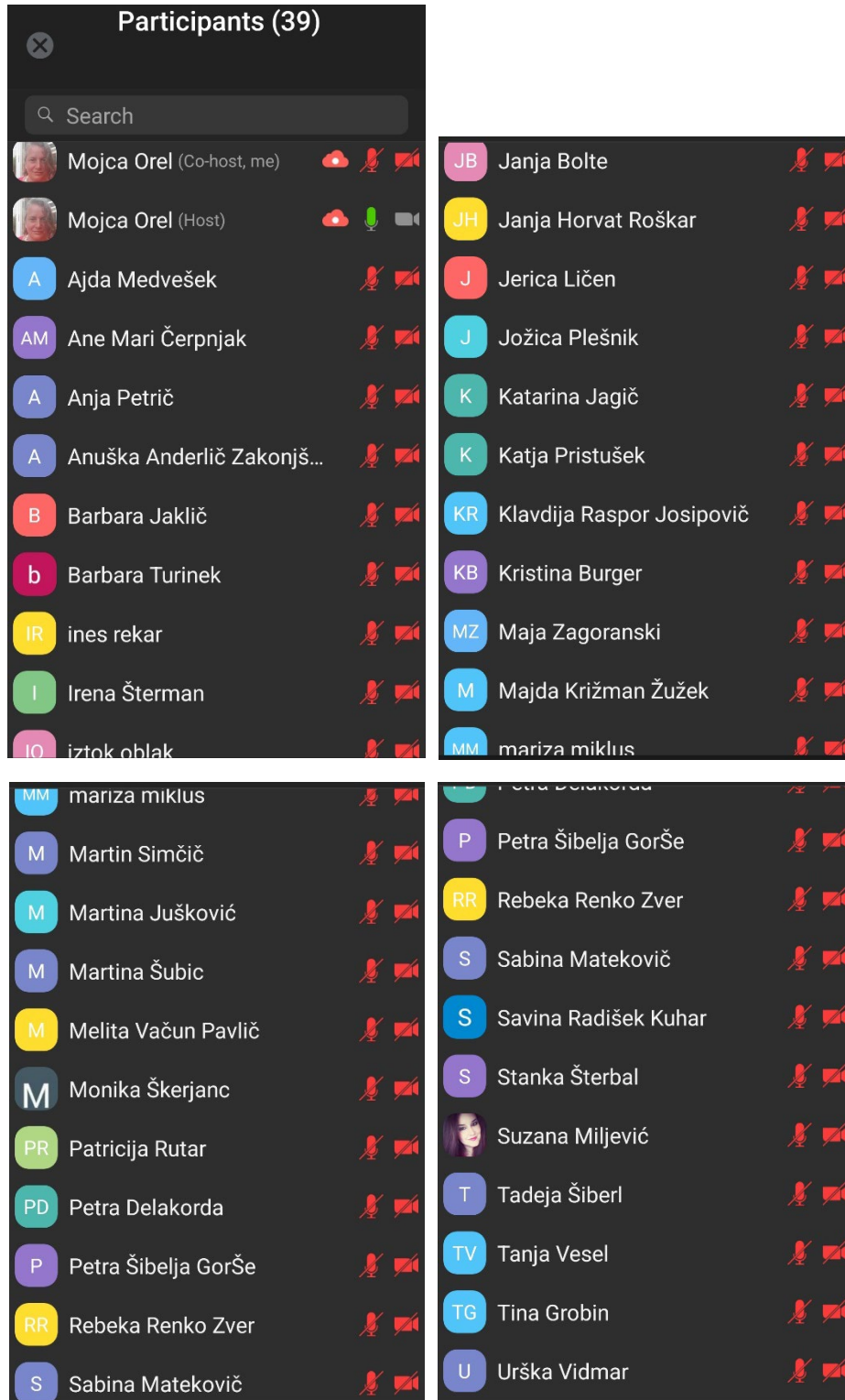
The second small scale meeting was organised as a section at an international scientific conference EDUvision 2024 in Ljubljana. 15 participants attended our presentation in person and 39 watched it via Zoom. The screenshots below show people who attended the event online.

The main title of the conference was "Today's challenges - opportunities for incorporating innovative solutions in 21st century education", where the starting point was the question "How to teach the current generation, what knowledge to provide, what skills to acquire and how to do it in such a way that students are well equipped with the competences to face the challenges of life and acquire quality knowledge and skills for the future?". The figure below shows the logo of the conference.

Figure below shows the presentation of our team in the conference programme.

In the first part of the conference, members of the Slovenian team of the Digital stories project (Polona Gradišek, Maja Kosmač and Jože Rugelj) presented their paper "Digital stories project: digital storytelling to promote an engaging learning environment", which was beforehand submitted to publication in the proceedings of the conference. Moreover, we presented the Digital Stories project and the modules that we have developed with project's partners. We

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also presented the module, developed by the Slovenian team, in more detail. The presentation of the online platform with all the materials, prepared in the project, was also included in this conference session. We asked the participants of our conference session questions about their views on the traditional and digital storytelling, the digitalization of education, the use of digital tools in the learning process and the possible impact of storytelling on early school leaving prevention. An interesting discussion developed in which participants very actively shared their opinions and experiences on these topics. Their answers will be summarized in the following sections of this report.


In the second part of our conference session, 6 teachers from two Slovenian primary schools presented either their experience of using the project materials in their teaching or one of the modules they had already used in their teaching. One of the teachers attended the our Train-the-Trainers course in April 2024 where we presented the project and the teaching materials (modules) to teachers from all partner countries, who then helped to organise and deliver a pilot training for teachers in their own countries. 4 teachers who participated in the conference were participants in the Slovenian pilot training and 1 teacher started working with us through the testing of the project platform. Pictures below show the teachers during their presentations.
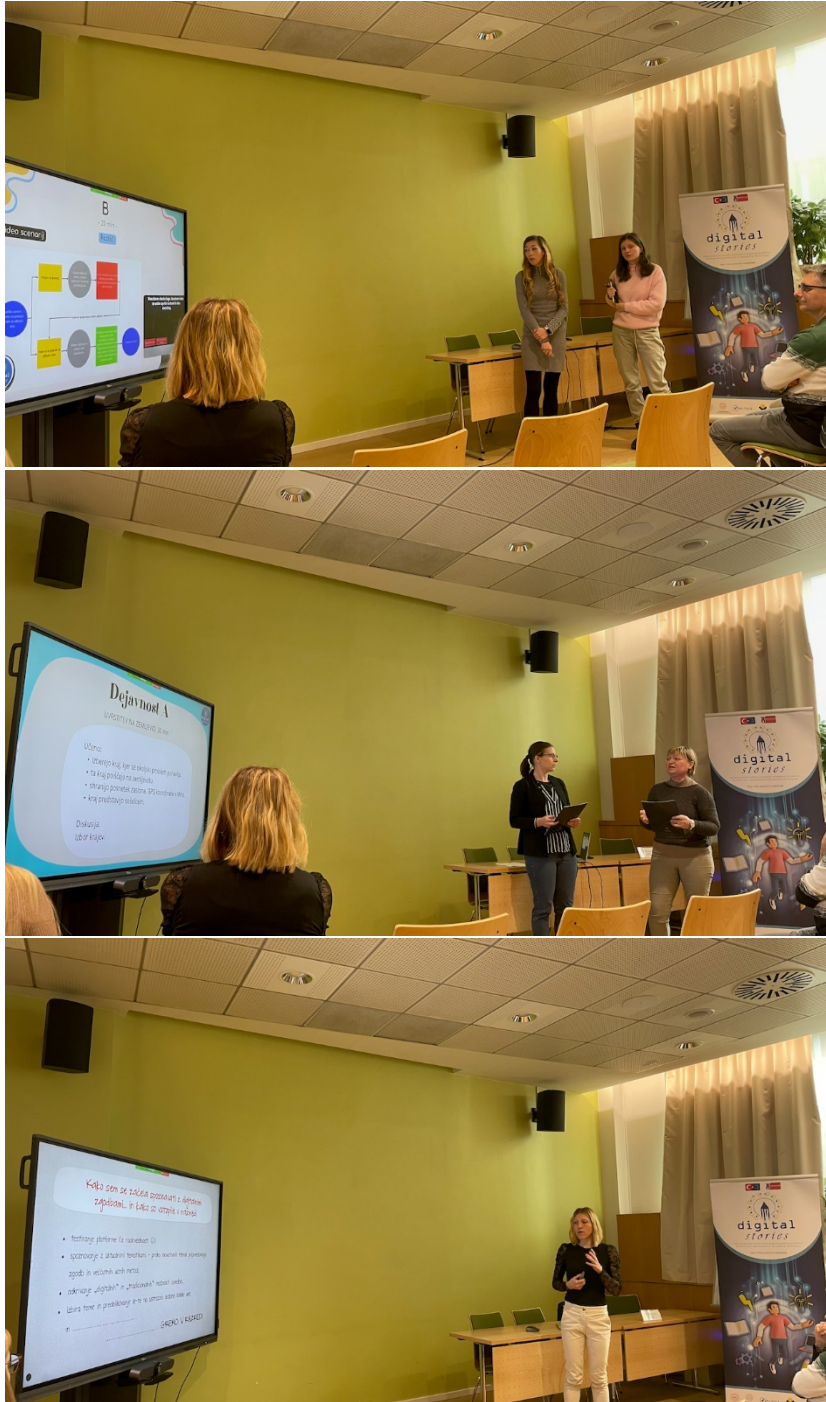
3.1. Analysis: Storytelling and Digital Storytelling

Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of transferring information and knowledge, used in prehistoric times and still relevant in modern education. Participants stressed that good stories engage students, motivate them, stimulate their curiosity, empathy, creativity, and facilitate memorisation and deeper understanding of the study content. In addition, stories have an important upbringing role, as they help students acquire behavioural patterns, develop critical thinking, and learn about values such as friendship and forgiveness. Participants consider storytelling in education to be a good technique to attract and maintain students' focused attention. Storytelling is irreplaceable because it adds an emotional

component to the bare facts or information, which allows for the further enrichment of contextual memories, while reinforcing the mechanisms of memory and establishing a valuable, highly personal relationship between professor and student. Through storytelling, students can express themselves, develop their imagination, reasoning, logical thinking, they learn about the narrative logic, they develop their linguistic and artistic competences. In addition, through stories, students can learn different concepts in an interesting and playful way. Participants pointed out that storytelling is useful and meaningful especially when it is oriented towards active learning and has a long-term impact on students.

Digital storytelling brings innovation to education by combining traditional storytelling with multimedia elements such as images, animations, videos and audio clips. Participants pointed out that digital storytelling enables the implementation of Mayer's principles of multimedia learning, increases students' interest and fosters the development of digital competences, creativity and collaboration. They pointed out that, compared to traditional storytelling, digital storytelling is more demanding to prepare and implement, as it requires digital skills from both teachers and students. Digital storytelling, compared to traditional storytelling, allows for more interactivity and reduces the static nature of the characters that appear in the story if it is made in a paper-pencil form.

Although most curricula in Slovenia do not include the active use of stories, some teachers use them as an introductory motivational activity, for introducing new content or for cross-curricular integration. Perhaps curricula for subjects such as Slovenian language, history, foreign languages include storytelling to develop and enrich vocabulary. One participant said: *"My former teachers, who I still deeply cherish, always told stories".* Also, most curricula do not require the use of digital storytelling, although they recommend the use of digital technologies in the classroom. Digital storytelling is less common in education, which can be attributed to the time pressure and lack of appropriate training for teachers. Nevertheless, participants highlighted the potential for digital storytelling to be included in a renewed curriculum in the Slovenian school system that would systematically develop digital competences.

Despite many advantages of using (digital) storytelling in education, such as better memorisation of the content and increased student's attention, several challenges remain. These include time constraints due to overloaded curricula, the complexity of objectively assessing students' stories, and the need to integrate stories in a thoughtful and planned way to ensure that this teaching method does not lose its relevance. The teacher needs to make sure that the story has a point and a thread so that the students can follow the story and not get lost in it, so the preparation or production of the (digital) story itself can be very demanding, requiring different skills and also a lot of time. Creating a story is also a challenging activity for students, so it can be difficult for a teacher to encourage unmotivated students to create good stories. Participants also highlighted the challenge of how to integrate digital storytelling effectively into vocational subjects in vocational secondary schools. Sometimes students don't understand the complexity of a topic because it is presented to them in a light-hearted way through a story. It is therefore necessary to supplement the stories with rough information.

3.2. Analysis: Digitalization of Education

Digital tools are an indispensable part of modern education, as they can contribute to a higher quality of teaching, increase students' motivation and attention, facilitate their understanding and memorisation of content, and prepare them for life in the digital age. Participants added that it is crucial that digital tools are used in a meaningful and thoughtful way, with the goals of improving teaching and learning effectiveness, better integration of content, saving time and not just enhancing the learning process. "Digitalisation is something that comes from needs", so digital technology should not be used "just to be used". A few participants felt that in terms of teaching or education in general, the introduction of new and additional tools is not at all crucial and may even be problematic, as it brings a false sense that we have thus ensured digital literacy.

Participants suggested several steps to increase digitisation in education. Raising awareness of the benefits of using digital tools in a meaningful way and teacher training are crucial, as some teachers still show resistance or lack of knowledge when working with digital technology. Teachers should have permanent access to appropriate technology and classrooms should be equipped with the appropriate technological equipment. The gradual introduction of digitalisation, appropriate examples of good practice and the development of curricula that includes the development of digital competences as compulsory objectives are also important. The discussion highlighted the need for a social consensus on the role of digitisation in schools, as current trends such as criticism of the use of screens and phones can be a barrier to its wider implementation.

Participants believe that education should make use of all tools that serve a good educational purpose and allow for more efficient, faster and better quality achievement of educational objectives. Teachers should first reflect on what they objectives they want to achieve and then search for the right tool. Participants of the small-scale meetings consider it important to teach students how to use tools for working with data, communication, collaboration and digital content creation, and how to decide which tool and how to use in a certain situation. Participants emphasised that technologies and the media are changing very fast and that the Ministry of Education should propose and regularly refresh a set of possible tools that are didactically relevant, safe, data-non-invasive and not in a commercial role of "chasing" the future consumers of the company that produces the tool. Teachers would thus not be left alone in their search for relevant and good digital tools. Several participants highlighted the potential of artificial intelligence tools for use in education, as they allow, among other things, the personalisation of learning.

3.1. Analysis: Early School Leaving

Participants emphasised that early school leaving is a complex problem that cannot be solved by digital storytelling alone. However, digital storytelling has the potential to contribute to reducing this phenomenon by offering opportunities for more engaging, inclusive and collaborative lessons. Participants pointed out that digital storytelling can help make connections between school content and real life, which is key for motivating the students. Participants noted that digital storytelling encourages the expression of feelings and experiences, which contributes to improved managing of emotions, developing empathy and

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understanding others. This can improve relationships between students and teachers and create better learning communities. In addition, digital storytelling allows the content to be personalised to individual students, stimulating their reflection and creativity, which contributes to a greater personalisation of learning. If students feel more accepted and positive in the school environment as a result, it can reduce the factors that contribute to dropping out of school. Participants suggested that through storytelling, students could be introduced to the life stories of different people, highlighting the importance of schooling and how a lack of formal education can make it difficult to acquire knowledge. Although it is possible to acquire knowledge on one's own, this path is often more difficult than attending school regularly, especially for students who have learning diffculties or face personal challenges. Organized education provides more than just subject knowledege; it helps students to develop several skills that are important in their lives and thus importantly affects their future lives.

4. Conclusion

The small scale meetings with different stakeholders highlighted the value of storytelling and digital storytelling as impactful tools to enhance the educational process. Storytelling fosters students' focused attention, motivation, empathy, and deeper understanding of the subject knowledge, while digital storytelling adds engagement and enables developing of students' digital skills through multimedia elements. However, challenges such as time constraints, insufficient teacher training in the use of digital tools, and the need for a thoughtful integration of digital storytelling into the curricula were also emphasized. Discussions on digitalization of education stressed the importance of purposeful use of digital tools to achieve specific goals. Key steps include raising awareness of teachers and general public, goal-oriented teacher training, presentations of best practices, and reforming curricula to include digital competences as mandatory objectives. Regarding early school leaving, participants noted that while digital storytelling cannot address all its causes, it can make learning more inclusive and personalized, helping students feel more connected to school. By linking subject content to real-life contexts and fostering students' expression and creativity, digital storytelling can reduce factors contributing to student's dropout intentions and improve student learning engagement.