DEUTSCH-TÜRKISCHE JUGENDBRÜCKE
GENÇLİK KÖPRÜSÜ TÜRKİYE-ALMANYA

politischbilden.de

Digital Storytelling Workshops

Subtitle: Expression of personal experiences, ideas and emotions

In short

Digital storytelling workshops enable participants to express their personal experiences, ideas and emotions. They provide insights into the life experiences of others and allow participants to experience differences and similarities within the group.
Digital storytelling workshops provide information about digital media tools and multimedia tools, thereby promoting digital literacy. Participants can create digital and analogue visualisations either individually or collectively, exploring their own creativity and creative work in a collective process. Sharing their digital stories on social media platforms makes their voices accessible to more people worldwide. Overall, by promoting different perspectives through their diverse stories, they can contribute to expanding the "history" of the community/society to which they belong.
The concept was presented as part of a German-Turkish Method Lab and further developed for use in encounter contexts. In Turkish-German youth exchanges, digital storytelling workshops promote mutual recognition and shared learning by transforming personal experiences into collective narratives, bridging differences and strengthening democratic participation through the power of storytelling.

This description of the method was developed as part of the project "Navigating Democratic Challenges – Civic Education in German-Turkish Youth Exchange", a collaboration between the German-Turkish Youth Bridge (DTJB), Arbeitskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten (AdB) e.V. and Toy Gençlik Derneği (TOY).

Time required: 1-3 day workshop, ideally 2 days

Target group/minimum age: teenagers/young adults aged 12 and above

Group size: ideally a maximum of 8 participants and 3 trainers. Smaller (from 3 participants) or larger groups (up to 16 participants) are possible; adjust the number of trainers accordingly.

Required materials:
- Computers/tablets/smartphones, video editing software;
- For the visual part, possibly also materials for drawing, painting or sewing;
- Microphone/smartphone for sound recordings
- Headphones for digital editing
- Projector for internal group screening of digital stories

Author/organisation: Burcu Şenel Alpuğan, Hacettepe University Digital Storytelling Workshop Unit, Faculty of Communication, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey
Lioba Spörlein, HochDrei e.V./freelancer in the field of cultural education, Berlin, Germany

The method is suitable for the following modules

AdB
TOY GENÇLİK DERNEĞİ
Gefördert durch die bpb: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Co-funded by the European Union

(X) Diversity
(X) Politics
(X) Transformation

Keywords
(X) Discrimination
(X) Justice
(X) Identity
(X) Power relations
(X) Human rights
(X) Prejudice

Further keywords: intercultural learning, international encounters, peace work

Learning objectives / what skills will participants acquire:

- finding a way to express personal experiences, ideas and emotions
- Gain insights into the life experiences of others, discover differences, similarities and points of contact
- deepen digital literacy
- Promoting creativity and collaborative work
- Giving voice to one's own opinions and making them accessible to a wider audience
- Develop a multi-perspective approach by contributing your own stories to the "official" history of your society, promoting diverse perspectives

Learning content / which thematic priorities are set:

- Identity, belonging, democratic expression of opinion and participation
- Empathy and teamwork
- Digital skills and creative communication strategies
- Empowerment and intercultural understanding

Description of the process

Warm up with a "simit and tea" breakfast (30 minutes informal + 1 hour introduction)
Before the workshop begins, participants and facilitators gather at the venue, preferably early in the morning, depending on the schedule and context of the project. They start the day with an informal "simit and tea" breakfast, a half-hour warm-up session to get to know each other. Afterwards, depending on the context of the workshop, participants are informed about the structure, phases and expected outcomes of the workshop. In some cases, the facilitators show examples of digital stories to give participants an idea of the possible outcomes.

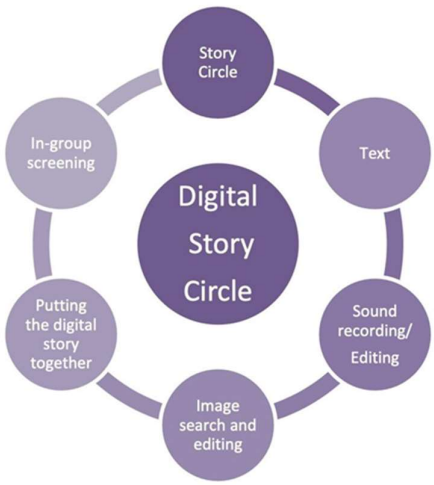
Participants are then informed about consent forms and the possible occasions or platforms on which their stories can be shared – from youth exchanges and NGO meetings to academic conferences. A written consent form is obtained from all participants. Important: For participants under the age of 18,

parental consent must be obtained in advance and should be available at the time of the workshop. Once everyone is ready, the participants sit down in a circle and the workshop officially begins.

Although approaches may vary depending on the moderating organisation or team, a digital storytelling workshop usually follows a six-step process (Şimşek, 2012a):

1. Story Circle (30 min – 1 hour)

Participants and facilitators sit in a circle and share experiences related to the workshop topic. The session begins with a short warm-up exercise in which participants introduce themselves and name three things they like or dislike, using playful aids such as lighting a match or throwing a ball. Usually, a facilitator begins by telling a personal story related to the workshop topic, after which the participants take turns telling their stories. This is a confidential process: once the circle has begun, the participants remain together until the end of the session.



2. Text writing (20 minutes or longer)

Next, participants have about 20 minutes to write down the stories they shared in the circle. These written texts form the basis for the voice recordings. After writing, participants read their stories aloud and the group gives feedback, reflecting on meanings, omissions and emotions. Participants who do not want to or cannot write can skip this step and record their voice directly.

3. Voice recording (short version 1-2 hours, longer version 0.5 day)

Once the texts are ready, participants record their stories one after the other. They then listen to their recordings and confirm their consent for use in their digital stories. The workshop leaders ensure that the process is clear and comfortable for everyone. If necessary, the voice recordings are edited using free software such as Audacity.

4. Visual production and selection (short version 1-1.5 hours, longer version 0.5 days)

Participants select or create visual material – photos, videos, drawings or paintings – to accompany their stories. This can come from personal archives or be created during the workshop. The facilitators also provide information on the use of licensed, non-commercial images from the internet and on obtaining consent from people who are clearly visible in the images.

5. Production of digital stories (short version 1.5 hours, longer version 0.5 days)

Participants combine their image material with their recorded voices using simple digital tools such as CapCut or Windows Movie Maker. They decide which image material accompanies which parts of the story, select titles and decide whether they want to publish under their real name or a pseudonym. Facilitators take special care to protect vulnerable participants – for example, those with a migrant background – by recommending the use of pseudonyms or anonymity where appropriate. The group also decides together on a title for the workshop itself, under which all stories can later be summarised.

6. Presentation and reflection (depending on group size)

The workshop ends with a presentation within the group. The participants and moderators view all the stories together, share their impressions and reflect on both the creative process and the final results.

Reflection questions for group discussion:
- What was the most powerful aspect of the digital storytelling workshop for you?
- What makes digital storytelling workshops so special in terms of sharing experiences?
- What was the most difficult or challenging part of the process for you?
- How did you feel when you saw your own story? What was it like to watch the stories together?
- After participating in a binational digital storytelling workshop, how do you feel about your sense of belonging? Do you feel more similar or more dissimilar to the young people from the other country?

7. Post-production (by facilitators)

The post-production phase then begins. Depending on the project, the stories may be translated and subtitled to make them accessible to a wider audience. The facilitators take care of transcription and translation. The finished stories can then be uploaded or shared on various digital platforms, project websites or international events.
An important example is the website http://www.digitalstoryhub.org of the Hacettepe University Digital Storytelling Workshop Unit, a significant platform with a collection of more than 100 digital storytelling workshops in which hundreds of participants from different backgrounds and contexts have taken part.

Variations

A digital storytelling workshop is usually a two-day process in which, ideally, all participants are involved in every step. However, if time is limited, it is important that participants at least take part in the story circle and final screening, as these steps require the involvement of the entire group. In exceptional cases, other phases can be completed individually with the support of the facilitators.

Depending on the size of the group, their background and the time available, the workshops can be shortened to one day or extended beyond two days. In shorter formats, the stories can be shorter and participants can bring along prepared visual materials (e.g. personal photos) in advance.

Digital storytelling workshops can be adapted to different educational settings, from schools and youth work to seminars. However, they should always ensure a familiar and safe space. Outsiders should not be present during the process, as confidentiality and group cohesion are crucial.

In international exchange programmes, language and translation require special attention. If all participants speak a common language (often English), the stories can be told and recorded in that language. However, in groups with different linguistic backgrounds, interpreters may be required. Continuous translation can be tiring, especially for young participants, so facilitators should plan strategies to maintain engagement and smooth communication.

Notes

Participants should be given the option to share their stories under a pseudonym or anonymously. This is particularly important for participants in contexts where communication channels are restricted or censored, or where revealing their identity could potentially harm them.
In addition, it is of course possible for individuals/young people to share their experiences through channels such as personal blogs/social media accounts.
However, the most important aspect of digital storytelling workshops is not so much the result, but rather that they enable and encourage direct exchange between participants by bringing them together with others who have had similar experiences. This increases the visibility of their own stories and creates connections. The Story Circle, one of the most important steps in the workshop, brings participants together, similar to a campfire, whose purpose is to connect people and create both community and (limited) publicity. Digital storytelling workshops therefore focus more on the process of creating the workshop and co-production than on the final product. This process is similar to the **consciousness-raising groups** of the feminist movement.

Important:
The exchange in the Story Circle thrives on the fact that everyone present is equally asking questions, contributing their stories and sharing their experiences, including the moderators. They do not intervene in the participants' storytelling or production process. Their role as moderators is to make the process understandable for everyone and to ensure that all participants are equally involved. In addition, they contribute to the process on an equal footing. Facilitators should be aware of this shift in roles compared to other workshops.

On implementation:
Particularly with regard to cultural differences and possible political debates in the context of Turkish-German encounters and exchange programmes, moderators should make it clear to participants that the aim of the workshop is not to solve macro problems, but to provide a safe space to talk about what they are experiencing, thinking, feeling and have in common, and how this might affect them personally.

It should be emphasised that there are different approaches, but that digital storytelling workshops ideally do not necessarily pursue an aesthetic approach to the digital stories produced in the workshop. Since the main goal is to make the participants' experiences visible and disseminate them,

the workshop space is open to everyone, without the need for a (digital) educational background or aesthetic knowledge.

On the use of the term 'story':
One of the most important features of digital storytelling workshops is that the term "story" here does not refer to a "fictional story" that participants are supposed to invent or write, but to their "lived experiences." The story circle consists of stories in which participants introduce themselves and talk about their experiences related to the workshop topic. Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of communication and is closely linked to the life of the storyteller. The listeners play an important role in this process, as they enable the story to be constructed and reflected upon. This highlights the dialogical aspect of storytelling. This can then give rise to collectivity, collective knowledge/meaning production and the visibility and audibility of all these stories. It therefore makes sense to point out in the moderation that digital storytelling workshops give priority to the voice and the story over the digital aspects.

Conceptual background

In the broadest sense, "digital storytelling" refers to narratives that are created and shared via digital media such as social platforms, blogs or websites. It enables "ordinary" people to create their own representation and express their own view of social contexts. The workshop-based digital storytelling model builds on this idea, but emphasises collective creation, joint reflection and co-production of knowledge.

The term "digital storytelling" dates back to the 1980s. The concept itself was first used by Dana Atchley, who incorporated multimedia elements into a storytelling performance (Rossiter, 2010). The founding of the Centre for Digital Storytelling in 1994 under the direction of Dana Atchley, Nina Mullen and Joe Lambert was groundbreaking for the transition to an institutional structure for the collective production of digital stories in a workshop environment with a special team of facilitators. The Centre for Digital Storytelling has carried out digital storytelling projects in various parts of the world and facilitated training courses and workshops, thus contributing to the emergence of a global movement (Şimşek, 2012b).

The Digital Storytelling Workshop Unit at Hacettepe University is one of the world's leading institutions for workshop-based digital storytelling, focusing in particular on gender-specific topics and contexts. It was established in 2009 at Hacettepe University's Faculty of Communication under the direction of Burcu Şimşek, who wrote her doctoral thesis entitled "Using Digital Storytelling As a Change Agent for Women's Participation in the Turkish Public Sphere" (2012b) at Queensland University of Technology in Australia. The dissertation focused on digital stories by feminists in Amargi, one of the leading feminist organisations in Turkey at the time, and discussed the potential of DST workshops and digital stories for disseminating feminist narratives and building feminist networks that directly contribute to discussions in the public sphere in Turkey. It asked whether digital storytelling workshops "can be used as an engine for change to activate and facilitate women's self-representation for their participation in society by challenging the idea of the public sphere."
Overall, since the introduction of the first digital storytelling workshops worldwide, these institutions and many other NGOs and collectives have been conducting workshops on digital storytelling on many topics, including health, migration, gender, education, etc.

In terms of theoretical references, digital storytelling is located at the intersection of "voice" and "digitality" – both key concepts in communication studies and feminist theory. It deals with questions of subjectivity, agency, participatory culture, collective meaning-making and the relationship between the public and private spheres.
"Digital storytelling" is a term that encompasses all forms of storytelling and can be used broadly for all formats that emerge in new media such as social media platforms, blogs or homepages. The main feature of these narrative forms is that they show "normal" users/producers/individuals who use digital devices and new media environments to contribute their own narratives and disseminate them to people all over the world. The workshop-based digital storytelling mentioned here reflects the same approach and has the same origins. However, it differs from individual storytelling in that it involves a collaborative creative process with participants and facilitators that promotes the exchange of experiences and the joint production of knowledge in a workshop environment.

Additional material (images, links, worksheets, toolbox, etc.):

References Literature:

- Alexander, B. (2011). The New Digital Storytelling: creating narratives with new media. Praeger.
- Burgess, J. (2006). Hearing Ordinary Voices: Cultural Studies, Vernacular Creativity and Digital Storytelling. Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 20(2), 201-214.
- Cultural Science Journal - Vol 8, No 2 (2015): Broadening Digital Storytelling Horizons.
- Hartley J. (2009). //the_uses_of_digital_literacy//. The University of Queensland Press.
- Hartley, J. & McWilliam, K. (eds.) (2009). Story Circle: Digital Storytelling Around the World. John Wiley & Sons.
- Lambert J. (2013), Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community. Routledge.
- Lundby, K. (ed.) (2008). Digital Storytelling Mediatized Stories. Peter Lang.
- Meadows, D. (2003) Digital Storytelling: research-based practice in new media. Visual Communication, 2 (2), 189-193.
- Papacharassi, Z. (2002). The Virtual Sphere. New Media & Society, Vol 4(1), 9–27.
- Poletti, A. (2011). Coaxing an intimate public: Life narrative in digital storytelling. Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 25: 01, 73-83.
- Şimşek, B. (2018). İletişim Çalışmaları Bağlamında Dijital Hikaye Anlatımı: Kavramlar ve Türkiye Deneyimi. İstanbul: Alternatif Bilişim.
- Şimşek, B. (2012a). Enhancing women's participation in Turkey through Digital Storytelling, Journal of Cultural Science, Vol 5, No 2, 28-46
- Şimşek, B. (2012b) Using digital storytelling as a change agent for women's participation in the Turkish public sphere. PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology.

Websites:
www.digitalstoryhub.org
http://www.storieswithoutvisa.org
https://www.storycenter.org
https://silencespeaks.org

DEUTSCH-TÜRKISCHE JUGENDBRÜCKE
GENÇLİK KÖPRÜSÜ TÜRKİYE-ALMANYA

politischbilden.de

License

(X) CC BY SA Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public Licence (CC BY SA 4.0). Information: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de
Burcu Şenel Alpuğan, Hacettepe University Digital Storytelling Workshop Unit, Faculty of Communication, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey
Lioba Spörlein, HochDrei e.V./Freelancer in the field of cultural education, Berlin, Germany

AdB
TOY GENÇLİK DERNEĞİ
Gefördert durch die bpb: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Co-funded by the European Union