

Digital storytelling promotes HIV and AIDS education in Africa

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Children from poor backgrounds and with no previous technological experience are able to use digital storytelling to share their secrets and fears online, shows a recent doctoral thesis completed at the University of Eastern Finland. Since 2002, Marcus Duveskog, MSc, has been involved in various projects in southern Africa focusing on the development of technologies that make it possible for children and youth to share their experiences of HIV and AIDS.

Digital storytelling incorporates various types of media, including text, images, animations and sound. In addition to computers, digital stories can also be read on smart phones. The digital stories collected by Duveskog are available online at <http://www.surayaukimwi.com>. The name of the platform, Sura ya UKIMWI, means the "Face of AIDS" in Swahili.

The digital stories were co-designed and created in cooperation between Duveskog and children participating in the projects in five different settings in Africa. The majority of the research settings were located in the poor, rural parts of Tanzania, while one was located in Pretoria, the affluent capital of South Africa. The study analysed which types of learning environments support creativity, and it also developed a method for the evaluation of learning environments. The opportunity for creative expression is of key importance for the creation of expressive stories especially when it comes to sensitive and delicate topics such as HIV or AIDS in the family. By providing active support and creating an atmosphere that fosters free expression, it was possible for children to

express themselves creatively. Furthermore, an open attitude towards learning is important.

In a world that is easily divided into game designers and game users, for example, it is important to notice that anyone can create digital stories, including African youngsters from [poor backgrounds](#). According to the study, the context in which the story is created matters. The storyteller creates the story in his or her own environment with the tools available, but it can be read by anyone anywhere in the world.

The study is linked to today's topical discussion on development aid and its problems and possibilities. The majority of the funding for the study was allocated by the Academy of Finland for development research. The results show that projects carried out in cooperation between universities and civic organisations can have a significant positive effect on African everyday life.

The findings were originally published in several conference proceedings in the field of [educational technology](#), as well as in *Educational Technology & Society*, *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, and *British Journal of Educational Technology*.

More information: The doctoral dissertation, entitled Digital Storytelling for HIV and AIDS Education in Africa, is available for download at epublications.uef.fi/pub/urn_i..._78-952-61-1673-0.pdf

Provided by University of Eastern Finland

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