

# **Digital Hero Book Project**

## **Final Report**

December 2007

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**MOLOTECH**

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# 1 Executive Summary

*– Discovering and engaging with young heroes through digital storytelling –*

The Digital Hero Book Project (DHBP) involves the creation and sharing of personal, positive stories by youth from around the world, which focus on their strengths and “hero” qualities. By combining digital storytelling with online group collaboration, the project develops literacy, 21st-century digital media skills and cross-cultural awareness.

The project, a pilot, ran from August 2006 to end-September 2007. Thirteen Khanya schools were originally selected to participate; the three schools that finally completed the project were joined by a school from the USA and one from Kenya. In total, 85 learners created paper-based hero books and 20 went on to create digital hero books (7 learners in a three-day in-depth digital storytelling workshop with Amy Hill and 13 learners in a one-day simpler digital storytelling workshop with Steve Vosloo). Thirty learners, from South Africa (SA), the USA and Kenya also participated in online forum discussions with one another.

The research and development phase of the project took place at Stanford University, California, through the Reuters Digital Vision Program<sup>1</sup>. Most efforts there were spent on researching digital storytelling, collaborative educational project models and technology platforms, as well as co-coordinating the international participation of groups from the three countries.

Khanya commissioned an independent evaluation of the DHBP, which was conducted by PG Consulting and Associates during October and November 2007. The evaluation report, which is submitted with this report, focuses on the findings of the participating Khanya schools and includes interviews with principals, educators, learners and Khanya facilitators. The primary aim of the independent evaluation was to understand the benefits and challenges of the project in order to inform the decision on how to move forward and scale the project. While the independent evaluation focuses on the activities in SA, this final report considers the findings of the project as a whole, including the international collaboration and technology issues.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.rdvp.org](http://www.rdvp.org)

## Deliverables and goals

The project deliverables and goals (as per the original proposal) are set out below:

Deliverables and goals	Notes
The <b>training</b> of 25 educators on hero book facilitation. At least 2 REPSSI facilitators were to be trained in the digitisation process.	Partly done. In December 2006, a workshop was held to train educators – only 12 educators attended this event. Jonathan Morgan offered to hold another workshop but none of the absent educators responded.
Pilot the methodology on 125 school learners who would <b>create, digitise and publish hero books</b> .	Partly done. In South Africa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 78 learners created paper hero books. Hero booking was offered in Reading, English, Administration, Life orientation and Arts &amp; Culture lessons.</li> <li>● 15 learners were part of the online exchange.</li> <li>● 20 learners created digital versions of their books through digital storytelling workshops.</li> </ul> Internationally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 7 learners created paper hero books (in Kenya).</li> <li>● 15 learners were part of the online exchange.</li> </ul>
Research and develop a methodology – written up as a <b>toolkit</b> – for digitising hero books. The methodology would work in a range of ICT environments, from a well-resourced lab with digital camera, scanner, microphone etc. to “bare bones” ICT facilities.	Done. This is online at <a href="http://www.digitalherobook.org/toolkit">www.digitalherobook.org/toolkit</a> and will be available as part of a double DVD pack in March 2008.
A <b>DHBP website</b> , launching with 125 hero books and functionality for peer-to-peer support for learners and educators.	Done, except for the number of hero stories on the site. <a href="http://www.digitalherobook.org">www.digitalherobook.org</a> is the project site with 7 example stories and a blog. Actual online exchange between participating learners happened on the iEARN website forum. The educator network was temporarily set up as a Google group, but will be expanded in a Joomla site being developed in the next few months.
A <b>provincial, national and regional rollout plan</b> , based on the data gathered from this pilot.	Not done. At this stage it is uncertain how the work will be incorporated into the curriculum, although we do now know in which lessons digital hero booking was, and can be, implemented by educators. A plan for curriculum inclusion is described below.
A project <b>report</b> (including an independent project evaluation).	Done.

A major realisation was that we should not have tried to pilot the project with 13 schools. That number should have been much lower, e.g. two to three schools. Because 13 proved to be too

many to manage, the deliverables of 25 educators (two from each school) and 125 learners (five from each school) was not achieved.

## **Successes**

By all accounts the project was a success. It highlighted the need to provide psychosocial support to learners – as part of their whole education – and showed real benefits in terms of engaging learners and improving educator-learner relations. Bonnie Lamb, one of the participating school educators said: “Some of my learners who were the most disruptive before, have been the most enthusiastic to embark on the project. It’s been a real eye opener to see these kids like this. One of my learners told me how therapeutic the process was for her.” Another educator, Druscilla van Niekerk, said: “I’ve been waiting a long time for a tool that will help me connect emotionally with my learners. The digital hero book project is that tool. My next task is to encourage other teachers in the school to do hero booking with their learners.”

The executive summary of the accompanying report says this:

“While refinements around the implementation process; facilitating the value to all; content sensitivity; and sustainability through psychosocial support is needed, it is most encouraging to report that the outcome produced by the pilot of the Digital Hero Book Project thus far is exceptional. PG Consulting believes that the Digital Hero Book Project is a compelling means to assist the Learner and to support the Educator.”

It also found that the DHBP:

- Helps educators to pay closer attention to learners' individual needs.
- Instructs educators on how to get learners to a position of dignity, self-confidence, and respect.
- Supports educators in discovering learners' interests; what motivates him or her; the child's nature and most importantly, why he or she behaves in a particular way.
- Provides a good way to build on learners' strengths, experiences, skills and abilities.
  
- Resulted in the grades of certain learners improving, although this is based on anecdotal evidence from educators and principals. Educators reported that some learners' writing skills and ICT skills improved because of the project.

The report also makes recommendations for improving the project. Through interviews with principals, educators and learners it provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for the project.

The project cemented relationships between Khanya, Molotech, REPSSI and the Center for

Digital Storytelling, and laid the foundation for further collaboration and digital storytelling efforts in SA. Molotech received additional funding (\$9,800) from the Firelight Foundation to package and distribute the DHBP DVD, thereby increasing the reach of the project.

## **Challenges**

The challenges that we experienced were mostly education and psychosocial related:

- Many SA educators are overworked, overstretched and underpaid; they simply can't take on any more extra-curricular work (which is what the DHBP was for some). The success of the project was due to champions who "ran with it".
- As a result of major time constraints in their day, most educators are not online much. Using email as a form of communication and co-ordination does not always work. This made co-ordination from the USA tricky.
- Limited time in the computer labs. This constraint affects any ICT-based project in schools.
- The DHBP surfaced the psychosocial problems of learners. While this had the very positive outcome of creating a deeper and more sympathetic understanding between learners and educators, some of the educators felt that they were not fully skilled to deal with these problems. They "are not counsellors."
- In Cape Town, some parents did not allow their children to participate in the project, presumably because they did not want home issues to be discussed at school.
- Formal evaluations of psychosocial support-based projects cannot be done easily or quickly.
- The iEARN platform is safe and secure, but not very user-friendly. To be an iEARN member is not free in all countries.
- Where to fit the project into the curriculum is a challenge because it can fit into a number of learning areas.
- Initially it was difficult to "sell" the project because there was nothing tangible to show for it.

The accompanying report found that some educators felt that they needed more support from the DHBP team in the form of workshops, a more user-friendly hero book manual, follow-up sessions and a more user-friendly toolkit.

## **Learnings and recommendations**

- Digital storytelling is very engaging for youth, especially problem learners. Future similar projects in SA should capitalise on this engagement factor by choosing less sensitive content for the stories.
- A more interactive platform is needed.

- Because educators are very busy, they need to be supervised regularly (at least once per week) when undertaking new projects.
- In the future we should pilot with fewer schools and consider following a learning circle approach to manage participant co-ordination.
- The issues of sensitive content and privacy pose a challenge in a school environment, where sharing and going online might be a required learning activity. Two ways to overcome this issue are suggested below.
- While the online interaction in the forum was positive, it lacked cohesion. More structured facilitation of the online engagement was needed.

## **Way forward**

The following actions are suggested to build on the momentum of the project and move it forward to the next phase:

- Assess if and how the project is to be included into the curriculum. Khanya will be a key driver in this process.
- Continued educator training and digital hero booking within three Khanya schools.
- Ongoing content management and promotion of the DHBP website.
- Creation and distribution of the project DVD with example stories, the toolkit, etc.
- In the forthcoming Joomla-based version of the website, explore social networking features to facilitate dialogue between participants.
- Commission a formal psychosocial evaluation of the project.

The services of a consultant, Helen Alexander, has been acquired by REPSSI for 12 months to continue the work of the project and bring it squarely under REPSSI's control. She will be responsible for driving forward the activities above. It is suggested that the focus of the next phase be on getting more educators at the three core participating schools in Cape Town to use the project. Learnings from that phase will inform how the project can be included into the curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

The project showed that digital hero booking is an engaging and effective way to address to the massive need for psychosocial support in SA's schools, as described in the Ministerial Committee's *Schools that Work* report (see 2.1. *Rationale*). Implementing any psychosocial support initiative in a school environment is very challenging and needs the co-ordinated support of the principal, educators, parents and even the greater community. Still, it is a necessary and worthwhile endeavor. We are pleased to know that REPSSI will continue to grow and research the project and recommend that the Shuttleworth Foundation provides continued support, in whatever way applicable.

A key learning was just how engaging digital storytelling is for learners. Framed by this insight and the increasingly technology-based participatory culture of the developed world, we recommend that digital media and youth continues to be an area of focus of the Foundation into the future.

## 2 Background

This chapter provides the background to the project: why it was conducted, its goals and the partnering organisations.

### 2.1 Rationale

School learners in South Africa have significant psychosocial needs. HIV/Aids, poverty, violence and unemployment increase the vulnerability of youth and can result in withdrawal from school, poor learning capacity, depression or vulnerability to physical, sexual and drug abuse. The minister of Education commissioned research into a sample of schools (in middle quintiles) that succeeded in achieving good Senior Certificate results, while others in similar circumstances did not. The recently published report *Schools that Work*<sup>2</sup>, highlights the dire need for, and inadequate provision of psychological support for many learners. The report makes eleven recommendations, one of which is as follows:

“The provision of additional psychological and social welfare support should be a high priority for schools in difficult circumstances – most notably, township schools.”

A hero book is a proven, simple and low-cost form of psychosocial support where a child or youth is the author, illustrator, main character (hero) and editor of a paper-based book that is designed to help them think about their goals and overcome a specific challenge or obstacle in their life. Hero booking has been proven<sup>3</sup> to:

- Primarily help develop problem solving and communication skills, in the context of participants' own lives.
- Provide participants a chance to move on from the past and focus on a positive life, i.e. develop self-esteem and future-focus.
- Provide a framework for people to support each other – youth peer-to-peer support or adult-to-youth support.

Hero booking is an effective intervention, but in its current paper-based form it is limited in

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=310&id=6932](http://www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=310&id=6932)

<sup>3</sup> Hero booking has been through a formal review process that led to improvements in the methodology, and is the subject of a broader monitoring and evaluation study. See the REPSSI, University of the Western Cape, Oxford University and Cape Town Child Welfare research collaboration entitled, *Investigating the Impact of the Hero Book Intervention* 2005 and Noble, B 2006, *Hero Books from the perspective of young people using the intervention*. Both papers are available upon request.



reach. We wanted to explore the digitisation of the process, particularly in schools, where computer labs are increasingly providing ICT access opportunities for learners. The existing hero book manual and process lent itself well to digital storytelling, which involves telling stories and sharing information through digital media<sup>4</sup>. Digital storytelling fosters real-world connections, develops decision-making skills, provides opportunities for learners to work collaboratively and incorporates different content areas<sup>5</sup>. Because it is based on storytelling (though scripting), learners improve their literacy<sup>6</sup>. It was our hope that by combining paper-based hero booking with digital media creation, learners would benefit from psychosocial support and the development of ICT skills.

More information on the project's rationale can be found in the final proposal to the Shuttleworth Foundation (September 2006).

## 2.2 Objectives

The objectives for the DHBP were as follows:

- To **research** how best to integrate digital storytelling into a developing country classroom context.
- To **integrate** the psychosocial aspects of hero booking into the education curriculum via ICTs.
- To **develop life** and **ICT skills** in educators and learners.

## 2.3 Partnerships

The following South African organisations formed a partnership to implement the DHBP:

- **Molotech**<sup>7</sup>, which provided research and project management.
- **REPSSI**<sup>8</sup>, which provided psychosocial support. It works with children in 13 Sub-Saharan African countries affected by HIV/AIDS, poverty and conflict.
- **Khanya**<sup>9</sup>, the Western Cape Education Department's school information and communication technologies (ICT) enablement program.

Support partners were:

- **Centre for Digital Storytelling**<sup>10</sup> (USA), which offered a digital storytelling workshop and provided consultative support throughout the project.

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4 Examples of digital storytelling initiatives: the Center for Digital Storytelling ([www.storycenter.org/](http://www.storycenter.org/)), MAP/South Africa Digital Stories ([www.engenderhealth.org/ia/www/wwwmds.html](http://www.engenderhealth.org/ia/www/wwwmds.html)) or "I too have a story" ([portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=22266&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=22266&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html))

5 Simkins, M, Cole, K, Tavalin, F & Means, B 2002, *Increasing Student Learning Through Multimedia Projects*, Alexandria: ASCD.

6 Mello, R 2001, "The power of storytelling: How oral narrative influences children's relationships in classrooms", *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 2(1).

7 [www.molotech.org.za](http://www.molotech.org.za)

8 [www.repssi.org](http://www.repssi.org)

9 [www.khanya.co.za](http://www.khanya.co.za)

10 [www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org)

- **IEARN**<sup>11</sup>, the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN), which provided the platform for learner collaboration. iEARN is the world's largest network of primary and secondary schools and youth organisations using technology to engage in collaborative educational projects. The DHBP is one of its approximately 100 projects that connect school learners from around the world.

Core funding was provided by the Shuttleworth Foundation, with additional funding and support from Khanya, Reuters Foundation and Stanford University.

## 3 Preparation

Preparation included selecting partners, a collaboration platform and ensuring the safety of the learners involved.

### 3.1 Participant Selection

The project piloted in 3 locations: in a number of Khanya schools in and around Cape Town, a middle school in San Francisco called Prospect Sierra, and with youths from Tumaini Children's Home in Kenya. Some youth from Naz Foundation Care Home in New Delhi, India, were also part of the project for a time, but unfortunately had to drop-out because of staffing issues at the foundation.

Molotech worked with Khanya to select 13 schools to participate in the project, representing different locations, learning environments and socio-economic groups of learners. All of the international participants were involved through random introductions to educators at schools and care homes in different parts of the world.

#### 3.1.1 Khanya schools

The chosen schools were:

School name	Location	EMDC Area
Dominican School for the Deaf	Wittebome	South
Montagu Drive Primary	Mitchells Plain	South
Floreat Primary	Steenberg	South
Eisleben Road Primary	Mitchells Plain	South
Kraaifontein Youth care Centre	Kraaifontein	East
Eikendal Primary	Kraaifontein	East
Noluthando School for the Deaf	Khayelitsha	East
Masipumelele Primary	Khayelitsha	East
Westcoast School of skills	Saldanha	West Coast Winelands
Porterville High	Porterville	West Coast Winelands

<sup>11</sup> [www.iearn.org](http://www.iearn.org)

Seder Primary	Clanwilliam	West Coast Winelands
Wellington Youth Centre	Wellington	West Coast Winelands
Wellington Secondary	Van Wyksvlei	West Coast Winelands

Learners at most of these schools face daily challenges that have their roots in the informal or previously disadvantaged settlements in which they live, the high unemployment levels among their parents, alcoholism, violence and the single-parent nature of most of their families. More information about these schools is in the accompanying report by PG Consulting and Associates.

### **3.1.2 Prospect Sierra Middle School (USA)**

The American pilot school, Prospect Sierra Middle School<sup>12</sup>, is private, affluent, well resourced (labs with Macs, broadband, etc.) and well staffed. Seven learners, aged 13 to 14, participated in the project. Each term, learners at Prospect Sierra must take an elective, which covers a topic or activity that typically falls outside of the usual subject areas. The learners can choose from a range of options. Digital hero booking was such an afternoon elective.

### **3.1.3 Tumaini Children's Home (Kenya)**

About halfway through the project the Tumaini Children's Home<sup>13</sup> for needy children in Nyeri, Kenya, joined in. The participating learners at this rural home are aged 9 to 11 and are mostly AIDS orphans. Schooling has been sporadic during the lives of these children. Claire Williams from Berkeley, who volunteers at Tumaini helps the children to write a blog<sup>14</sup> — the first ever by orphans and vulnerable children. She facilitated the learners as they worked through the hero book manual on paper. Some of them also participated in the online forum.

### **3.1.4 Naz Foundation (India)**

Through a chance meeting at Stanford with Anjali Gopalan, the founder of Naz Foundation<sup>15</sup> in New Delhi, India, it was decided that youth from her care home would join the project. The group in India dropped out of the project in April due to most of the support staff at the Naz Foundation Care Home leaving at the same time, and also a bout of measles afflicting the children (hospitalizing some of them). This was very frustrating because the learners had made good progress working through the hero book manual and apparently had learned to create short videos and use Google's Picasa to manage and edit photos taken with their digital camera. Hopefully there will be capacity in the care home to continue with the project in the future.

<sup>12</sup> [www.prospectsierra.org](http://www.prospectsierra.org)

<sup>13</sup> [tumaini.faithweb.com](http://tumaini.faithweb.com)

<sup>14</sup> [tumainikids.blogspot.com](http://tumainikids.blogspot.com)

<sup>15</sup> [www.nazindia.org/care\\_home.htm](http://www.nazindia.org/care_home.htm)

### **3.1.5 Platform for online exchange**

We made the assumption that since this was a pilot project and we did not know the exact requirements of the users, it would be best to use an existing platform. This would allow us to focus on the process of the project and at the end of it be in a better position to clearly define the requirements of the users based on actual research. It did not make sense, for example, to customize a Drupal installation, which would take some time, on assumed needs.

While considering a potential platform we researched existing sites that enable group and/or educational collaboration, e.g. iEARN, StudentPlanet, TIG Ed, 21classes, Blogger, Livejournal, Edublogs, Google Groups, Yahoo Groups, Wordpress.com, Wikispaces, Manila, Ning, Vox and Class Blogmeister, as well as open-source content management systems (CMS) including Joomla!polis, Drupal, Around Me, Connexions, Wordpress and Plone4Artists. While many of these platforms fitted some of the project requirements, none was a perfect fit for the DHBP. However, the closest option was iEARN. This site is comprised of over 100 closed, secure forums (discussion boards) for each of the projects within the iEARN network. The forums are accessible via the web, email or news reader. Because it is a global network, iEARN makes it easy to find international groups to join the project – a good quality for future collaboration.

The DHBP had its own forum. Steve Vosloo was the project lead for the forum and created user accounts for the educators and learners. We intended the forum interaction to work as follows: after learners had been through the hero book manual and created paper hero books, they would go online, share their hero book content, read those of other young heroes and freely discuss the similarities, differences or broader issues related to these. The forum allowed for discussions, begun by a facilitator, in which postings and threads could take place. We created discussion topics headed "Hi, I am ...", "A hero in my life", "My community / Club of Life", "My goals", "My obstacles" and "My shining moment, tricks and tactics" -- all activities in the hero book manual.

### **3.1.6 Safety**

Because the project involved the creation of sensitive content using information and communication technologies (ICTs), safety was of prime concern. Participants aged 10 to 14 would be creating their own hero books, some of which would be shared online in a secure and/or public space. Since social networking websites were first popularised, there has been much publicity (especially in the USA) around the risks of online social networks – such as MySpace<sup>16</sup> or Facebook<sup>17</sup> – for young people. However, based on the limited research that examines the media hype, it is clear that the benefits far outweigh the risks. Based on research of best-practices, we took care to provide a safe space and process for youth of

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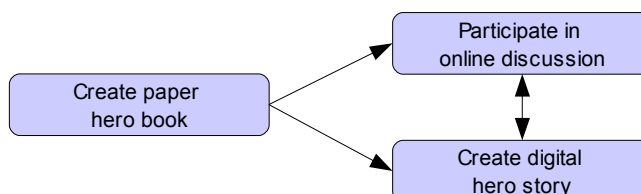
<sup>16</sup> [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)

<sup>17</sup> [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

different cultures, histories and places to engage each other around common hero booking themes of community and the goals, challenges and solutions that are relevant today. For more information on how we made the project safe, read our blog post<sup>18</sup> on this topic.

## 4 Pilot

The process of participation involved creating a paper-based hero book and then digitising it as well as participating in online discussions with other hero book authors.



We initially intended for all participants to follow this process, but due to various constraints (discussed in 8. *Challenges*) some learners only created paper-based hero books, while others also participated in the online discussions, but never created digital hero stories.

### 4.1 Paper-based hero booking

In terms of teacher training on how to facilitate paper hero booking, there were three scenarios:

- 1) In SA, Jonathan Morgan of REPSSI ran a one-day workshop with educators in December 2006. Not all educators involved in the project attended this workshop.
- 2) In the USA, Steve Vosloo ran the sessions with the learners from Prospect Sierra along with two other educators. Mr Vosloo was familiar with the hero booking process from interactions with Jonathan Morgan.
- 3) In Kenya, Claire Williams facilitated the sessions based entirely on reading the hero book manual.

The South African learners spent February to August 2007 creating their paper hero books. Some classes finished the process in 4 months, while others took 7 months.

In the USA, time with the learners was limited because the school year was drawing to an end (for the June to August summer vacation). Meeting once per week for 45 minutes, only ten sessions were possible. In the available time the learners worked through 75% of the hero book activities on paper and in class discussions, and also participated in the online forum.

### 4.2 Digitisation process: digital storytelling workshops

A few learners were able to participate in digital storytelling workshops, where they digitised

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<sup>18</sup> [www.molotech.org.za/blog/2007/03/17/putting-safety-first](http://www.molotech.org.za/blog/2007/03/17/putting-safety-first)

their paper hero books. The typical Khanya computer lab set up is described on the Khanya website<sup>19</sup>.

#### **4.2.1 First workshop, March 2007, Cape Town**

Amy Hill, Community Projects Director for the Center for Digital Storytelling, ran a three-day workshop with seven grade-7 learners from Eikendal Primary school in Cape Town. The learners used their work-in-progress hero books as content for their 2-minute movies. Jonathan Morgan provided psychosocial support during the workshop. The seven stories produced at the workshop are available at [www.digitalherobook.org/stories](http://www.digitalherobook.org/stories).

In the the digital storytelling workshop, participants used fairly complex software – Adobe Premier and Adobe Photoshop (the software usually used by the Center for Digital Storytelling), but this did not overwhelm the learners. The workshop was adapted to include outside physical/tactile activities and discussions as well. Amy described the workshop as “a resounding success, better than we could have hoped for! The learners were amazingly generous with their stories.” Her description of the workshop is in appendix A.



Amy Hill briefing the learners during the first workshop.

#### **4.2.2 Second workshop, July 2007, Cape Town**

For two days learners from Eikendal Primary, Floreat Primary and Montagu Drive Primary schools created their own digital hero books in a workshop led by Steve Vosloo. The workshop, held at Montagu Drive school in Mitchell's Plain, was both engaging and fun for all involved.

<sup>19</sup> [www.khanya.co.za/projectinfo/?catid=27](http://www.khanya.co.za/projectinfo/?catid=27)

Learners worked from their paper-based hero books to create a 1-minute digital version made up of scanned images, photos and images taken from the web, presented as a Flash slide show to the sound of their voice narrations. Selecting and editing the images, recording the audio and writing a script to tie it all together were some of the new skills that the learners learned. Audacity (open-source) was used to record audio and Soundslides (free) for creating the slide show. This software is available on the project toolkit.



Druscilla van Niekerk and learners creating their digital hero books during the second workshop.

More photos of the workshop are online<sup>20</sup>.

### **4.3 Online exchange**

Based on the model of a number of existing educational projects, we chose the approach of learner development and collaboration in a closed and secure website followed by voluntarily publishing of hero stories to a public-facing site for work that was safe and desirable to display. The DHBP site contains these public youth stories, whereas the online discussions occurred on the password-protected iEARN forums.

In total, thirty learners interacted on the forums, including fifteen learners from Eikendal Primary in Kraaifontein, aged 12 to 14, seven learners from the USA and eight learners from Kenya. The general difference between the learners was first language – English for the American learners, Afrikaans for the South Africans and other languages for the Kenyans – and age. The online conversations showed the US learners to have a more mature and well-articulated worldview. Despite these differences, the postings and conversational exchanges between learners were interesting.

A learner from the US and one from SA had each lost an uncle/aunt to cancer; they shared

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<sup>20</sup> [www.picasaweb.google.com/digitalherobook/WorkshopMontaguDrivePrimary](http://www.picasaweb.google.com/digitalherobook/WorkshopMontaguDrivePrimary)

their feelings about this. For a learner from Prospect Sierra, her hero is Ghandi because "he made people realize that there were other ways to solve problems other than to fight and kill." For a learner in SA and in Kenya, grandparents are heroes because of their unconditional love.

A US learner wrote: "My goal is to be an actress, a fashion designer, or an artist. To get to these goals, it will be hard." The following response came from SA: "I want to become an actress too and that is one of my Big Goals. I attend drama classes which is every Friday. To me my career has already started and I will live my dream."

An 11-year old Kenyan orphan says that she would like to become a doctor: "I pray God to help me read well so that I can become a doctor when I grow up." A slightly older SA learner replied simply: "If you really want to become a doctor I think you should go ahead with your goal."

Some message postings did not get replies. But they stood out as powerful and candid messages:

"When I grow up I would like to become a professional athlete ... Sometimes I have negative thoughts I believe in myself most of the time." (SA)

"My obstacle is being lazy I would lay in front of the couch and watch movies and do nothing at all" (SA)

"Hey my name is Taythum I wanna talk about this one part of my hero book and it is the shining moment. There was this one time in my life that I really enjoyed is when I took part in a modeling show and I won it. And that day I felt very proud." (SA)

"I often feel insecurity and self-doubt because of pressure from my peers, the media, and our society as a whole. The media makes it seem like every girl should be so thin that you can see her ribs, and have perfect blonde hair and be six feet tall. The reality is, not everyone is like that. There are plenty of beautiful people out there who don't fit in stereotypes." (USA)

The learners could attach photos and other multimedia content to their messages. The US learners did this a lot. Smileys and emoticons were used throughout by all the learners (they could be added through the editor in the forum). As is evident in the messages above, spelling is a problem for some learners!

## 5 Toolkit

A toolkit developed by Steve Vosloo to help facilitators/educators implement digital hero



booking with their groups is available online at [www.digitalherobook.org/toolkit](http://www.digitalherobook.org/toolkit). The toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to turn paper-based hero books into digital hero stories. The four main sections are:

- Plan and prepare: educators and learners plan and prepare the elements of a digital hero story, such as the script, images and audio.
- Create: weaving all of the elements into a single story.
- Share: (optional) sharing stories and engaging with other young heroes from around the world.
- Resources: contains software, tutorials, example stories and links related to digital storytelling.

## **6 Feedback**

Overall, for the three Khanya schools that successfully completed the project, the feedback was very positive. The educators took their learners through the paper-based hero booking progress, and some of the learners were able to create digital versions of their hero books.

### ***6.1 Feedback from workshops***

Feedback from the educators included:

- “[The learners] thoroughly enjoyed this project. Many of them are more aware of their goals in life. They also find it easier to talk about their problems and can deal with them in a better way.”
- Of the seven learners who completed the digital storytelling workshop: “They definitely have more confidence.”

A simple questionnaire to the learners produced positive and interesting responses. One learner noted: “We help each other at the workshop with our problems or obstacles.” In one instance, this peer-to-peer support has also been seen online. Feedback from the seven learners who completed the digital storytelling workshop:

- “The workshop gave me self-confidence to overcome my obstacle. It played a big role In my life.”
- “It wasn’t just hard work it was actually very fun too. Something that really touched me was how the workshop helped me to overcome my problem. I am [now] able to talk in front of people without becoming nervous.”

Some of the learners noted that it was difficult to share emotional issues with other people, but that it was worth it in the end because they felt more empowered and strengthened to try to overcome the problems/obstacles that stand between them and their goals. Questionnaire responses are in appendix B.

Claire Williams, who lead the participation of the Tumaini children (in Kenya) was very pleased to be included in the project. She said: "Thanks for all the amazing work - along with the kids here, I am so grateful to be able to learn from this project!"

## **7 Progress**

### ***7.1 School drop-out***

The original plan was for educators to work on hero booking with their learners – on paper – and then to go online in May 2007. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Steve Vosloo emailed the educators at the 13 schools in SA to "check in" and get a status update, but got no response from most of them. Attempts to talk by phone were largely unsuccessful. By May 14<sup>th</sup>, Khanya had reported on behalf of all the schools that only three schools were still actively engaged with the project, while the rest were in the following status:

- Five of the schools were very interested in the project and saw its value, but had not progressed much at all; they were "getting there." Reasons included: lack of time, one educator being on maternity leave and another struggling to cope with new curriculum challenges (although she said that she would like to implement the project the following term).
- Three of the schools explicitly dropped out of the project, citing two reasons: i) it was too difficult to take learners with behavioural problems, poor language skills and "low competence levels" through the hero booking process, and ii) lack of time.
- Two of the schools implicitly dropped out of the project by simply "dropping off the radar", not returning any calls or emails despite many attempts to make contact.

According to Beverley Job-Beziek, a Khanya facilitator, the educators at the Dominican School for the Deaf struggled to implement the DHBP because they felt they didn't have the vocabulary to communicate the manual to their learners. They probably need to work with or through a psychologist who knows sign language.

Reasons for school drop-out are covered in greater detail in the accompanying report by PG Consulting & Associates. Again, we believe that piloting with fewer schools would have produced a more achievable result.

## **7.2 Educator strike**

The educator strike in May and June caused delays in the project.

## **7.3 iEARN website migration delays**

iEARN has been in the process of migrating from its old website to a new one, which was planned to be ready in March 2007. The process has taken much longer than anticipated; the new site might only be fully functional by the end of 2007. The iEARN data migration introduced bugs into the existing system. Our DHBP forum within iEARN was only ready from 14 May 2007.

# **8 Challenges**

Much was learned from the DHBP, especially in the form of the challenges described below.

## **8.1 Educator related**

### **8.1.1 Educators' capacity**

Many South African educators are overworked, overstretched and underpaid; they simply can't take on any more extra-curricular work. The findings of this project echo the May 2007 edition of the Shuttleworth Foundation newsletter that describes educators as feeling "alone, unsupported and disillusioned."

Further, the project success relies on champion educators, e.g. Druscilla van Niekerk of Eikendal Primary, Bonnie Lamb of Montagu Drive Primary, Joy Prinsloo of Floreat Primary, and their respective principals. Claire Williams in Kenya simply ran with the project, working only from a manual. While this is impressive, it presents a real challenge when considering how to scale up the project. We cannot assume that there will be a champion educator in every school.

Khanya facilitators are also burdened with work. Estelle Malan, a Khanya facilitator, was overseeing schools for the DHBP that are not from the 23 schools that she oversees as her Khanya responsibility. She already struggles to see the 23 schools that she is paid to see, and so was stretched at times, trying to keep up as liaison between Steve Vosloo in America and the DHBP schools she was assigned to.

### **8.1.2 Time constraints**

Educators often only use the IT lab in a school once a week (for 45 minutes) and need to decide what to do during that time. There are simply not many hours to work with when

planning digital hero booking sessions for the educators and learners.

### **8.1.3 Difficulty of online communications with educators**

Some educators at the Khanya schools, while being IT-enabled, simply did not respond to emails. We asked the Khanya project manager to follow up with these schools and eventually someone had to drive to those sites to establish the status of the projects there. Even one of our most involved educators only checks her email once a week. Phoning often proved to be the only way of communication, but this was also challenging due to time differences, bad lines and "subscriber unavailable" messages. For most educators involved in this project, whether it is due to lack of time, interest or limited ICT facilities, there simply isn't a routine of daily email communication.

## **8.2 *Psychosocial related***

### **8.2.1 Dealing with psychosocial issues**

According to Beverley Job-Beziek, some of the educators felt that they were not fully skilled to deal with the psychosocial problems of learners that surfaced during hero booking. They "are not counsellors."

### **8.2.2 Challenge of psychosocial work**

Because hero booking involves thinking about one's community, family and problems/obstacles, the content that is written is personal and sometimes very sensitive. This process is valuable from a psychosocial point of view, but poses a challenge when going online where the technology is so much about sharing content and connecting with others. Revealing sensitive information in a school context is also problematic. In Cape Town, some parents explicitly prohibited their children from creating hero books, presumably because the parents would be implicated for drug abuse, domestic violence or other sources of pain for the children.

Scaling up memory work – such as hero booking – has its own set of challenges, as found by a project<sup>21</sup> expanding its work through Africa. Two key challenges are:

- How to effectively reach more children whilst maintaining the same impact on the individual.
- How to ensure the same level of quality and standards of the activities, when implemented by different people with different groups.

All of the above challenges will apply to scaling up the DHBP throughout schools.

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<sup>21</sup> Ward, N. (2005). Scaling up Memory Work: the challenges.  
<http://www.medicusmundi.ch/mms/services/bulletin/bulletin200503/kap03/08ward.html>

### **8.2.3 Evaluation is time-consuming**

The educational impact of psychosocial support work, as applied in digital hero booking, cannot be quickly or easily measured. Formal evaluation takes time and requires significant resources, as seen in the evaluations of paper-based hero booking that have been conducted by UWC students, Cape Town Child Welfare and Oxford University. The groups have done pre- and post-hero book quantitative tests, using standardised psychometric scales, and qualitative tests, as applied to weight-listed matched control groups.

## **8.3 General challenges**

### **8.3.1 Partnering with iEARN**

Partnering with iEARN presented a few challenges, as explained below.

To participate in the iEARN forums, all schools need to be members of the iEARN network. The cost and administration of membership varies from country to country: in SA membership is free, in India it is nominal and in the USA it is \$400 per year. Steve Vosloo negotiated with iEARN to waive the USA and India charges, explaining that the DHBP was a pilot project and it was difficult to convince the schools to pay annual membership fees for only one project.

While the iEARN forums scored highest on safety and security, their user interface is not very intuitive. It takes some time to get used to the navigation. We wrote helper docs to assist learners and educators in this regard.

### **8.3.2 Curriculum alignment**

From the beginning of the project there have been discussions around where to fit the DHBP into the school curriculum. At the Hero Book Workshop held with educators and Khanya facilitators in December 2006, the option of mainstreaming the project across the curriculum – rather than as an add-on for already burdened educators – was discussed. Below is an excerpt from the report of that workshop:

*With regard to hero booking across the curricula – an educator is interested in exploring how one educator, for example a life orientation or history educator – might initiate the process and lead learners through hero book activity 1: My Goals, then the history educator might take the class through the activity that deals with history (family history), and do real justice to how personal family histories interweave and constitute group and national histories, and then the geography educator might take the process forward from there exploring and mapping the context (community) which is a separate activity. So in theory a learner might go from lesson to lesson all in the course of a day,*

*and do 3 different hero book activities, and in the process learn not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also receive psychosocial support as well as ICT capacity building.*

Steve Vosloo discussed this with Caitlin Martin, a researcher at the YouthLab<sup>22</sup> in Stanford University's Education Department. She has much experience in technology-based educational projects and referred to a similar attempt to carry a project across educators in a school. In that particular instance the approach was unsuccessful because each educator did not support the project equally and there was not enough communication between the educators to make the transition between lessons seamless. Thus while implementing a project across the curriculum seems like an obvious choice, especially in SA where OBE aims for interplay between the learning areas, it is not without its challenges, in any country.

### **8.3.3 Initially difficult to “sell” the project**

Estelle Malan said that it was hard to “sell” the project to the schools that were chosen because even she did not really “get it” in the beginning. Digital hero booking had not happened before. Now that there are digital hero books from the two workshops, a website and the three “success story” schools, she believes it will be easier to explain and promote the project to other schools.

## **9 Learnings and recommendations**

### **9.1 Digital media production is engaging**

Digital storytelling is very engaging for youth, especially problem learners. Streetside Stories is a San Francisco-based non-profit organisation that has helped more than 7,000 low-income learners share their life stories, and improve their literacy and technology skills. It runs digital storytelling workshops at schools that are not dissimilar to many schools in South Africa in that violence, drugs and crime are rife. An independent, two-year longitudinal study<sup>23</sup> was conducted on the work of Streetside Stories and, when compared with a control group, its students scored higher when it came to: following oral and written directions, listening without interrupting, listening actively, participating appropriately in class, and interacting appropriately with peers and adults. Their technology skills improved too. Future projects in SA, similar to the DHBP, should capitalise on this engagement factor by choosing less sensitive content for the stories.

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<sup>22</sup> [youthlab.stanford.edu/group.html](http://youthlab.stanford.edu/group.html)

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.streetside.org/blog/2006/12/some-illuminating-evaluation-results.html>

## **9.2 *More interactive platform needed***

Being an existing “off-the-shelf” product, the iEARN forum is not as customizable as it could be for our particular project. However, overall the forum has proved satisfactory for our needs: the learners were able to go online, post their messages and engage one another. It has revealed user requirements that will inform the decision to “build or buy” in the future, or simply continue using iEARN. The learners in the USA gave input into desired features. They were all very Web 2.0 savvy and use MySpace.com. At the beginning of the project one learner asked: “Is iEARN forum or bio?” At school, and through the media, they have been taught how to be safe online. They also understand “netiquette”. The learners enjoyed the forum interaction, but would have liked to have a personal profile (bio) page for each participant and the ability to communicate directly and privately with other learners (instead of communicating in one discussion forum that was seen by all participants). iEARN does not allow profile pages because of laws in certain countries regarding online activities of minors.

## **9.3 *Need for constant supervision***

That the educators in SA could be left on their own to implement paper hero booking with their learners was a false assumption. Neither the Khanya facilitators responsible for those schools, nor Steve Vosloo, checked on them regularly enough. Future projects should see weekly communication with educators, supervising their progress more closely.

## **9.4 *Pilot with fewer schools***

Choosing to implement the pilot with 13 schools was overly ambitious. It would have been better to focus on, say, two to three schools to make the process more manageable. The risk of involving too few schools is that of constructing a very “controlled experiment”, while working with too many schools can defocus the whole project.

## **9.5 *More inclusive digital activities***

The issues of sensitive content and privacy pose a challenge in a school environment, where sharing and going online might be a required learning activity. Amy Hill suggested two ways to manage this, as follows:

1. Develop one or two specific assignments that learners complete at the end of doing their paper hero books, which will be designed to go online and will only include materials that are appropriate to disclose. This could include writing a small piece about “how I am a hero in my family/school/community” or “how I want to be a hero in the future” to really draw out the learners' strengths without delving back into the sensitive content.
2. Another approach is to have levels of disclosure/sharing, e.g.

- Level one: paper-based hero book, where learners have complete control over privacy (might only share it with the educator and a few other learners);
- Level two: simple digital hero book in Soundslides or Open Office Impress, which can be the same as above or public;
- Level three (optional): public digital story posted online.

## **9.6 The challenge of coordination**

A key lesson has been just how much time, effort and negotiation it takes to run an international school-based pilot. Every country has different school calendars, subjects and governing rules! In the DHBP, each school progressed through the project at a different pace. One way to address this could be to follow the proven learning circle<sup>24</sup> approach which lasts a predetermined length of time, e.g. ten weeks, with very specific activities for all participants during that time. Learning circles usually involve eight to ten classes from anywhere in the world in the circle; the more rigid structure and process is proven to help keep most participants engaged and involved through completion of the project. The downside of this approach is that not all projects can be reduced to a shorter time period or fitted into a reduced set of activities. We should evaluate whether the DHBP can be adapted to a learning circle format.

## **9.7 More facilitation of online engagement**

While the online interaction in the forum was positive, it lacked cohesion. Learners spent much time in the classroom creating their paper hero books and sharing with each other face-to-face, but online most of the dialogue consisted of one-liners often not related to hero booking. Ideas for more engaging and substantial learner interaction online should be explored, as well as how to closely facilitate this.

## **9.8 Other insights**

- The learners are very aware of the need to work hard to reach their goals.
- Learners quickly picked up technology and software, especially through asking each other questions. This has potential relevance for Kusasa<sup>25</sup> in terms of the willingness of school children to help and share with each other.

# **10 Next steps**

The steps below comprise the suggested strategy for the second year of the project (post-pilot phase).

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<sup>24</sup> [www.ilearn.org/circles](http://www.ilearn.org/circles)

<sup>25</sup> [www.kusasa.org](http://www.kusasa.org)



## **10.1 Curriculum alignment**

It was agreed with Khanya that at pilot completion, we would review the process with the educators and, if applicable, approach the Curriculum Planners of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to motivate for including the project into the broader curriculum. It is assumed that paper-based hero booking would be offered to all schools, while digital hero booking would be an optional extra available to schools with appropriate ICT facilities. Based on a meeting held at Khanya on 25 July, 2007, the following steps were suggested for the project to be considered for inclusion into the curriculum:

- It was suggested that Khanya be the main vehicle and education partner to take hero booking forward. Therefore Kobus van Wyk, Khanya Programme Manager, must support the effort to include hero booking in the curriculum.
- The DHBP stakeholders need to write a proposal to the Director of Curriculum (WCED), explaining how hero booking is aligned to the curriculum (for individual grade levels), its benefits and how it adds value in ways that other products/activities don't.
- The DHBP stakeholders need to look at the curriculum<sup>26</sup> and indicate which learning outcomes from the Western Cape and National Curriculum Standards are met by hero booking and digital hero booking. These standards documents include Tables for Planning, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards, which are all useful when linking this project to the curriculum. Alixe Lowenherz was suggested as the best person to consult for linking digital hero booking to ICT-related curriculum.
- If accepted by the WCED, a tender will be advertised for products that offer the same learnings as hero booking. This is why it is important to differentiate hero booking from similar initiatives.
- If the tender is awarded to the DHBP, a more thorough exercise of curriculum alignment, with experts at the WCED, will happen. The existing toolkit will need to be adapted accordingly, with curriculum-aligned lesson plans, outcomes, evaluations, etc.
- Because educator training is required, budget will need to be found for the training, transport, potential accommodation, etc.

## **10.2 Continued educator training and digital hero booking**

In order to help focus and inform the efforts to mainstream (digital) hero booking into schools, more implementation is desirable within existing schools in a semi-controlled environment. It is suggested that Eikendal Primary, Montagu Drive Primary and Floreat Primary fulfil this role. In 2008, more educators from these schools should be trained to facilitate hero booking with their learners, more learners across a number of grades create paper hero books and more digital storytelling workshops be held for the learners to create digital hero stories. The REPSSI contractor will take the lead in coordinating these efforts.

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<sup>26</sup> [curriculum.pgwc.gov.za](http://curriculum.pgwc.gov.za)

### ***10.3 Content management and promotion of the DHBP website***

The content of the DHBP website should be maintained, including the project blog. The REPSSI contractor will take care of this. The project should also be promoted through a variety of online and offline channels. The Firelight Foundation funds will enable project promotion over the coming months.

### ***10.4 Enable secure social networking***

Any international project that allows school learners to interact online must be very safe to use and, as a further challenge, adhere to the laws governing minors online in every country where participants are from. Because of iEARN's wealth of experience over its 18 years of operation, it was a good choice as an interactive platform. Unfortunately the forums proved to be lacking in social networking features. To exploit the social networking potential of the project, a different platform must be used to facilitate posting, profiling and collaborating. A new site would include a password-protected area where learners upload their digital hero books and interact in a social networking way, e.g. comment on each others stories. The REPSSI contractor has implemented a number of sites with Joomla, an open-source CMS, and will build this over the coming months.

### ***10.5 Further collaboration***

The project has created momentum and relationships between groups from around the world. If the existing schools in the USA, Kenya or India want to continue being involved, then further collaboration between them and schools in the Western Cape should happen. The opportunity for interacting with youth from other countries was exciting for all of the participants in the project.

### ***10.6 More in-depth evaluation***

With increased self-confidence, self-esteem, or at least feelings of adequacy to begin to address the problems that are affecting the mental, emotional and psychosocial well-being of youth, comes a corresponding ability to better cope with life's challenges and therefore to learn better. But what exactly is the relationship between improved psychosocial well-being and improved school grades? This would be an interesting question to answer.

According to the University of Houston's College of Education<sup>27</sup>, "Dr. Helen Barrett has proposed a research design to collect data about digital storytelling in education. In part, Barrett suggests that if Digital Storytelling is to become an accepted practice in today's schools, it will be necessary to collect data about its impact on learner learning, motivation and

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.coe.uh.edu/digitalstorytelling/evaluation.htm>

engagement as well as teaching practices and strategies. She suggests that the following key research questions be investigated:

- How do digital stories provide evidence of deep learning?
- Under what conditions can digital stories be successfully used to support assessment for learning?
- How does the quality of paper-based reflection differ from digital stories?"

Further evaluations of the DHBP should consider answering research questions such as these.

## **11 Budget**

The project spend has been within the original proposed budget. Two sets of audited financial statements will be submitted: the first for the period until 31 March 2007 and the second until 31 March 2008. This report will be accompanied with the first financial statements. The second will be submitted by end of May 2008.

## **12 Conclusion**

Extensive support is needed for educators to make their teaching tasks easier and lighten some of the burdens they carry. Whatever the solution to introducing technology-based and collaborative activities into the classroom, it must be simple to use, support the educator and be curriculum-aligned. This is no easy task! We believe the DHBP has begun to work towards this goal.

For learners, the project provides an opportunity to critically reflect on and articulate their life situation, which is beneficial for their psychosocial well being. The project will continue to explore the power of social networking for positive change as it fosters international dialogue between disparate youth.

Molotech is satisfied with the achievements and learnings of the pilot phase and we look forward to watching the project grow over time.

## **13 Acknowledgements**

On behalf of the Molotech Board, we would like to once again thank the Shuttleworth Foundation for its support of this project. We hope that the project is a useful resource for the Foundation as it continues to push educational boundaries and explore pedagogical approaches within a technology-based context.

All of the project partners need thanking, especially:

- Kobus van Wyk and all of the Khanya facilitators involved in the project.

- The principals of the participating schools for their support.
- The educators of the participating schools, especially Druscilla van Niekerk, Joy Prinsloo, Bonnie Lamb, Kathryn Lee, Abigail Joseph and Claire Williams.
- Jonathan Morgan of REPSSI.
- Amy Hill of the Center for Digital Storytelling.
- Ed Garratt of iEARN, USA.

## **Appendix A: Description of March workshop by Amy Hill**

The Center for Digital Storytelling is a not-for-profit organization that works locally, nationally, and globally to explore the transformative potential of narrative and multimedia production. As pioneers in what has over our 15-year history become an international movement to integrate first-person participatory video production approaches into schools, youth programs, community centres, public health initiatives, and much more, we bring a wealth of experience to the projects we support.

I travelled to South Africa in February and March, 2007 to facilitate a number of health and human rights projects. The timing was perfect for the DHBP; even though funds were scarce, we decided that as partners on the project we would all join together to make a digital storytelling workshop happen with a group of 7<sup>th</sup> grade learners in Cape Town. Even though the specific methodology for the DHBP is still being developed, we knew that digital storytelling should be an important ingredient in the mix.

Working with everyone involved in the South Africa pilot of the DHBP was a breath of fresh air for me. The hope and optimism expressed by the learners as they struggled to share their own painful experiences and struggles really solidified my sense that storytelling can be a powerful tool for youth development and psychosocial support. The commitment of Druscilla and the Khanya folks, and the dedication that Jonathan brought to the process made for a smooth and very successful workshop.

Our standard digital storytelling curriculum assumes three full days of hands-on computer time and storytellers who are mature enough to self-motivate. Because we didn't have this much time for the DHBP workshop, because we were working with 12 and 13 year olds, and because we were adapting our process to fit with paper-based hero bookmaking, we went into the session with open minds and a willingness to be flexible. Our agenda was adapted as the weekend progressed to include more tactile/physical activities for the learners, such as drawing, discussions with Jonathan, multiple breaks for snacks and drinks, and some outdoor photography/videography sessions combined with play. This helped keep the storytellers engaged.

Rather than starting from scratch where story content is concerned, as we often do in our workshops with older youth or adults, we used the learners' paper-based her books as a starting point for content. After a group session during which each person shared her/his story and was offered support and validation, Jonathan and I met with them in small groups to help them adapt scripts from what they had already written and worked on with Druscilla. We also helped them select images from among the pictures they had drawn and photos they had brought from home. The learners finalized their scripts using a word-processing program on the computers, and the Khanya facilitators assisted with scanning and transferring files. I shortened the hands-on tutorials in image editing and video editing software and then worked with each child individually on the construction of their stories – tailoring the level of my direct involvement to what they needed and wanted.

At the end of it all, we celebrated together. We had learned on the first day that one of the learners had never had a birthday party, so we planned one for her, complete with cake and gifts. After screening the stories, which were received with loud and lengthy applause, we surprised this young woman and honoured each learner for what represents an incredible achievement: being among the very first group of public school learners in South Africa to complete digital stories! The finished work can be seen at [www.digitalherobook.org/stories](http://www.digitalherobook.org/stories).

The workshop made a number of things very clear: That young people are eager to share their stories, even the ones that might give rise to tears. That it's important to create a safe space in which they can do so, and to offer lots of unconditional love and support in order to meet and contain their feelings. That teachers on their own may not have the necessarily training/experience to do these things, and that teachers will need thorough grounding both in facilitation process and technology use, in order to do such workshops. As we move forward with the DHBP, we'll continue to work together to figure out the best way to make digital storytelling a part of it.

## Appendix B: Learner survey after first workshop

- "Dear Jonathan, It was a wonderful experience to work with you. I also had fun. I also learned out of my mistakes and obstacles. It was an experience sharing my story with them. It was amazing to see how we were working. Jonathan, Amy and Miss Van Nie Kerk. The friends I was working with names is. Galiah, Chermelle, Wuanile, Morne, Tamelin, Cafton, and Michael. We had a lot of support from our teacher and friends. The hero books were very excited to make."
- "Dear Jonathan, It was an experience of a lifetime and I learned many things. It wasn't just hard work it was actually very fun too. Something that really touched me was how the workshop helped me to overcome my problems. I am able to talk in front of people without becoming nervous. I'm grateful for that. I learned a lot of computer skills to, helping me to make a complete digital hero book. The producer of this book was Amy; she was the one to make time to show us the skills we have now. The one with all the information was Jonathan, showing us and giving all the explanations. The communicate we had was amazing. They gave us ways to overcome and even try to see our obstacles so that we could achieve our goals and dreams. The workshops was full of supportive and caring people and I'm thankful for that"
- "Dear Jonathan, It was a fascinating and astonishing event .The workshop gave me self-confidence to overcome my obstacle .I never knew I could overcome my obstacle ;but the workshop helped me to be strong and to stand on top of It .Amy our instructor told us about other children's "HERO BOOKS" and how they overcame their problems ; through that I learned a lot. Johnathan the one who explained every situation and listened to our conversations ;he really played a big part In the time being .This whole workshop had an impact in my life .It helped me to express my feelings and emotions I faced . The workshop played a big role In my life."
- "Dear Jonathan and Amy, At the workshop I learned how to put a story script on the computer and I made new friends with the other grade 7s like Michael, Wuanitle and Cafton.I made peace with sadness by telling my story to other children .I hope my story will teach other children to respect themselves and to appreciate what they have."
- "Jonathan and Amy showed me how to put my story on the computer. They both told us we should use tricks and tactics if an obstacle stand in your way and I learned that you should respect yourself in order to prevent an obstacle to stand in your way. Thank you very much."
- "It was something I never done before and I met new people and learnt new things. I listened to other children's stories. We help each other at the workshop with our problems or obstacles. The workshop helped us to form a group and to share what's personal in our lives Amy Hill one of the people who helped and showed us how to make our normal hand written hero books which we read to them into a digital hero

books which we read into a little microphone. Jonathan another person who helped us with our obstacle or problem (which I would like to personally thank for help and support) by tricks and tactics. Thanks a lot"