

South African apps teaching kids to be creative with technology

According to local artist and entrepreneur Danielle Orkin, the adoption of technology for entertainment, learning and developmental assessment amongst children is expected to increase in South Africa significantly because of the rise of smart device usage in the country.

Orkin is the developer of South Africa's first of its kind locally developed edutainment app for children, Monster Moogle, which was recently launched by Colormeclever Digital Kids, a partnership formed between Orkin and tech start up accelerators Fontera Skunk Works (a division of Fontera Digital Works) and SeedEngine.



It forms part of the popular edutainment app category and can be made use of by children between the ages of 4-12. The Monster Moogle interactive storybook brings the story to life through art, rich content, sound, interactivity and colourful animation.

She says that the app aims to add to the traditional educational and entertaining aspects of storytelling by adding a deep level of interactivity for the reader, and will not only stimulate a child's creative instincts and develop artistic creative design skills, but also assist with early

stage development.

According to a report by research firm VisionMobile, the global app economy was worth \$68 billion last year and is projected to grow to \$143 billion in 2016. World Wide Worx MD Arthur Goldstuck said recently that the app has become the single most significant tool driving the mobile economy in South Africa.

Using tablets improves children's skills

Orkin says that it is clear that children of today are living in a rapidly developing digital era and the increase of smart device usage for education and entertainment purposes is therefore a natural progression. "As a result, children's edutainment apps are being built on sound learning principles to offer 21st century tech skills and learning opportunities."

She says that using a tablet or similar device to develop a child's skill set has become a highly effective method of education globally and can result in improved hand-eye coordination, increased cognitive skills and creativity. Using an iPad can also improve a child's technological intelligence, which is becoming a fundamental pillar of learning for children and a requirement equivalent to reading and writing.

The interactive component of the app is based on the same thinking and logic as design programs such as Adobe's Photoshop and Illustrator and will help children develop an early understanding of how digital design programs work.

"Art and design in its digital form is a fun and enticing way to introduce various skill sets to children and help them to develop a tech-savvy way of thinking. My experience as an artist and art lecturer has taught me that art and design can help children in many ways, including how to think creatively, to acquire the skills to observe, assess and to understand, to express feelings without relaying them verbally, problem solving and critical thinking skills."

Stimulating creativity

The Monster Moogle Collage Maker app, which accompanies the Monster Moogle storybook, allows children to create their own characters and to write their own short stories using elements from the book. "The reason why I chose monsters as a topic is because I want children to let go of any preconceived ideas of how things should look and be."

On completion of creating the collage, the user may save it to their in-app gallery where they then read their own stories with their own illustrations.

The Monster Moogles storybook and Collage Maker concept stems from a creative collage teaching method which Orkin developed when lecturing Fine Arts at a tertiary institution which aims to develop creative problem solving techniques among business students. She says that the collage method helped many of the students overcome their perceived lack of creativity.



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It was recently introduced into local classrooms in South Africa and in response to a Colormeclever workshop, grade one teacher, Donna Dribbin says, "As a classroom teacher, I loved the workshop and I am so glad that I had the opportunity to witness my students broaden and deepen their creativity in such a fun, child friendly way. I loved how my students were able to come up with their very own monster idea and had the opportunity to take ownership of their monsters by naming and creating them."

The app is on sale on iTunes for iOS 7 and can be downloaded on iPad 2 upwards. It is also available on Amazon in non-interactive book format, which was developed for the Kindle.

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