onTrain

Online Training, the treasure within

D. Tools and platforms
2. Learning the learning tools

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Content

Let's start

Today's learning and teaching skills have shifted to require that both teachers and students know how to use digital tools in their methods and search for knowledge. This will require for them to master digital learning tools.

What am I learning here and why?

In this chapter it will be our goal to explain the trainer that to use Digital Learning Tools, some learning needs to occur first. Even for Digital Natives! Preparing the content that will be available on the CLPs is key for a more eased learning, as well as preparing designing the strategies and planning the activities, not forgetting that CLPs like the content they will transfer, are completely new to the user most of the time.

What content will I find here?

Content design strategies specific for digital online learning tools. How to prepare your online platform using whatever learning tool you choose, while giving your adult learner all the previous knowledge about them, empowering him and preparing him for the course knowledge.

Preparing for learning using digital tools

For the trainer, as for the learner, both must be prepared to enter a digital environment where everything needs to be completely thought of and structured in advance, so that the only concern will be the knowledge acquisition. i.e. if a teacher asks the students to present themselves using a specific presentation tool, but do not specify or create a user guide on how to use it, most will have difficulty in understanding how it works, losing a great amount of time to learn how to use the presentation tool, and not making a good job, just because they were not advised or prepared properly. For most of them, just the fact that they are in a CLP is completely new to them, and finding things becomes more of a problem and a waste of time, leading them off the CLP instead of just engaging them. Selecting properly and preparing the tools and contents, is therefore of utmost importance so that real learning can take place.Informal learning is understood to be the one that, even regardless of an intentional choice, takes place in the performance, by each person, of activities in situations of daily life and in the interactions that take place in it, within the context of work, family and leisure time.

For the teacher, it is advisable to learn all the most recent tools, staying on top of technology, and take into consideration that none of the students will know how to use them. If you prepare yourself for the least tech-savvy student, that student will learn, and the digitally-savvy one will

learn as well. If you prepare just for the tech-savvy, the one that is tech-excluded will not be able to have as nice results as he could have.

This bring us to another problem to be considered as relevant: students need to learn how to learn using these tools. This means that, of course, adult learners, and believe it or not, young learners as well, need to prepare before starting to participate in these Digital Learning Environments. Getting familiar with the tools where the learning will take place is essential, as well as explaining the methodology approach, tasks and processes that will be happening. Most teachers will assume that digital native students already know how to use such tools, and that will come easy for them. But the fact is, that Digital Natives are not as digitally competent as one would think. Yes, they will try to use it. Yes, they will try to make sense of it. However, they are only most used to either games, communication tools or social tools. In a 2017 study, researchers Messias & Morgado (2018) were able to perceive that digital natives are not as tech-savvy as one might have hoped. In her study, she states that students struggle with CLPs, they struggle with using digital tools for learning, with creative commons rights, copy-write, they struggle with participating in formal group chats of forums, they struggle with new strange and static environments because they only use technology to communicate socially or for entertainment. Learning with learning tools is therefore essential, so that the student will be able to know how to search for information in and with these tools, how they can be used to share, and really encourage sharing, how to use add-ons to self-monitor progress, give them proper feedback and letting them know where they can get that information. Learning how to learn on a digital world should be a priority, and these set of tools should be developed prior to the knowledge transfer takes place.

E-skills, digital literacy and soft skills – competencies in online learning

E-skills can be divided into 3 levels: 1) ICT practitioner skills, 2) ICT user skills, and 3) ICT business skills. 1 and 2 are essential to be developed before the learning process is set in motion. As such it is relevant that the teacher/trainer knows what these are and how to develop them. ICT practitioner skills are those that one will require in order to make a research, design, develop, manage and maintain ICT systems. These are essential for the teacher/trainer to master. They will require to have some level of academic qualifications, because they will require profound knowledge of how ICT systems work to be able to create learning courses in those systems. The ICT user skills are the most common of all, and they are the ones that will allow a person to use ICT base devices. It encompasses Digital Literacy and is key for the user to be more confident and critical of how and what to tool to use for work, leisure, learning and communication, not to mention to know how to and where to look for valid information.

As for Digital Literacy, referred above, it was defined by Martin & Ashworth (2004) as "*the awarenesses, skills, understandings, and reflective approaches necessary for an individual to operate comfortably in information-rich and IT-enabled environments*", and these are in fact the most critical to develop on a learner prior or firstly, to prepare them for CLPs, because these will allow them to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment. As Jones-Kavalier

& Flannigan (2006) state "*Literacy includes the ability to read and interpret media, to reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and to evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from digital environments*", and these will enable them the basic competencies so that they can gain the most with CLPs.

Soft skills will be the key for a successful Lifelong Learning using CLPs, because they encompass communication skills, critical and structured thinking along with analytical skills, and creativity. And even though these can be and should be developed early in childhood, they must be promoted as key to not only learn in digital environments but also to thrive in the workplace.

Exercises

To help you master the online available learning tools of today and help you understand how to help your students master them as well, we have created a set of activities and exercises that you can use in your classroom.

Exercise 1: Where did I get that notion from?

Try several social CLP, like eXo, Atiral, NowComment, MURAL, Skillshare, CueThink, Google Hangouts, YO Teach!, Tricider, Edmodo, and choose the one you like best to keep in touch with your students after classroom time, in case they have any questions for you.

Exercise 2: Recognise the system

Try creating content using gamified and quiz based CLP, such as GooseChase EDU, Classcraft, Adobe Captivate Prime, h5p, Piazza, Kahoot, Socrative. Add the content to your LMS course and ask students to try the games you created. There are many games possibilities in all of the tools above, choose the ones better adjusted to your classroom subject. Ask students if they were able to solve them, if they liked them and if they were helpful in understanding the contents.

Summary

In this chapter you have learnt what Learning tools are, how they can be implemented, the benefits of doing so and how we can learn through and with such tools.

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