



DIGITAL

Digital Technologies to Improve Adult Learning

Good Practice Compendium

Innovative approaches in digital
teaching in adult education



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Digital Technologies to Improve Adult Learning

Co-authored in 2020 by the partners of DIGITAL,
co-funded under the Erasmus+ programme of the
European Union.

Edited by Learning Hub Friesland, The Netherlands.

More information on the project at
www.digitaleducator.eu

2019-1-FR01-KA204-062287



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Contents

**Introduction,
methodology and
how to use this
guide**

Pages 4 - 7

**Case studies
from digital adult
educators across
Europe**

Pages 8 - 25

**Practical steps to
put DIGITAL into
practice in your
teaching**

Pages 26-31



Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the DIGITAL Good Practice Compendium. A digital publication that encourages knowledge sharing and peer learning among Adult Education organizations and stakeholders by identifying and sharing leading innovative approaches in using digital teaching for adults, with a special focus on disadvantaged and marginalised adults and NEETs.

In the following chapters you'll read about the experiences of adult educators from across Europe with their digital tools, explaining what works and what doesn't in their daily practice working with adult learners. You'll also be able to hear from colleagues across Europe first hand in short video interviews – a treasure trove of practical knowledge and tips.

Approximately 90% of jobs today require some level of digital skills

This compendium was compiled in 2020 during the global COVID-19 pandemic – a strange and difficult time for us all, but also a period which has massively accelerated the uptake of digital tools for learning. Educators and learners alike have been introduced to new digital ways of working, but we've also been reminded how valuable face-to-face experiences can be, especially when used alongside digital ways of working.

We hope that you're inspired by the examples collected here to start using digital tools in your

teaching practice, or perhaps to start using them in a different way.

The DIGITAL project

DIGITAL is an Erasmus+ project bringing together partners from Netherlands, Greece, Denmark, Germany, France and Ireland.

DIGITAL has a clear objective: increase the ability and motivation of educators working with low-skilled, low-qualified adults to use digital learning strategies and tools in order to make learning more attractive, relevant and boost their professional and personal development.

In order to achieve this goal, the project will develop a number of practical tools and products to help adult educators on their way, including this good practice compendium. We'll be building on the insights from the best practices with:

- **DIGITAL Toolbox**
An interactive publication featuring the 20 best digital learning resources, tested and tried by our team, with practical guidance on how to use them.
- **DIGITAL Online Learning Course**
A course that adult education teachers can use to strengthen their own digital skills. Uniquely, each module of the course will be taught using a different platform, thus integrating learning outcomes with the delivery mechanism.

By working together across borders, we aim to create a more inclusive Europe where digital tools in adult education make a real difference to people's lives. The examples in this compendium show it can be done.

Methodology

First-hand experience from adult learning practitioners across Europe

This best practice guide is based on the practical experience and knowledge of adult education professionals from across the continent as collected by the partners of the DIGITAL project. With partner organisations based in France, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Denmark and the Netherlands, the case studies presented here are truly pan-European.

Project partners reached out within their networks to adult education organisations who are making use of digital tools at all levels – from pioneers who put all things digital at the heart of their teaching, to those who are taking their first steps in using online tools. We interviewed professionals asking not only on what works, but just as importantly what

doesn't work and why. The case studies show adult educators across Europe using digital skills to boost creativity, to help newcomers to their countries feel included and access public services, to support young people in overcoming personal struggles and learning to express themselves, to make their teaching more flexible and accessible to learners... and much more besides!

We've also worked with the adult educators we interviewed to create short videos, allowing you to come face to face with colleagues from across the continent.

In the final chapter of this guide, we took the practical examples you'll read in the coming pages and summarised them, looking for the common threads and translating them into practical steps which adult educators can take to make better use of digital tools with learners.



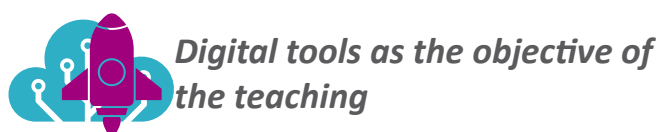
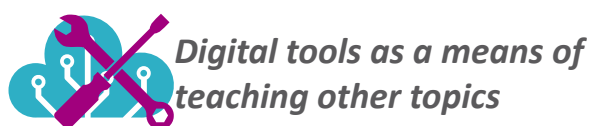
Using this guide

Learning from others

In the case studies you'll hear from your fellow adult educators, from right across the spectrum of organisations which work with adult learners across Europe. You'll hear from business incubators, NGOs which support newcomers in their steps towards integration in their new countries, trainers who work with sports clubs, kindergarten workers, healthcare organisations... anyone who has adopted digital tools to improve their teaching and training. Even if a case study seems at first glance not to have much to do with your organisation, we hope you'll be able to learn from the experiences described by the adult educators who work there. The case studies are based on the experiences of the interviewees, so any recommendations and practical tips come from straight from them.

Digital tools as a tool or as an objective themselves

The various cases you'll encounter in the next chapter use digital tools for different means, but to make them easier to navigate we've created a few categories and symbols. The first two cover the role that digital tools play in each case – whether they're being used a tool for teaching other topics, or whether learning digital tools is the main objective of the training.



Look out for the icons at the start of every case study!

Different organisations and settings

Due to the range of different adult educators who contributed to this guide, we've added tags at the top of each case study indicating the type of organisation and the teaching setting, for example classroom teaching versus remote learning.

Common tools explained

Some of the case studies talk about specific tools which the adult trainer uses in their daily practice.



You'll see small "toolbox" inserts throughout the case studies explaining some of the most commonly used tools in more detail. These will only be short summaries, so if it's new tools you're after look out for the DIGITAL toolbox which will be created as part of the DIGITAL project and will explain the most useful tools for adult educators in more detail.

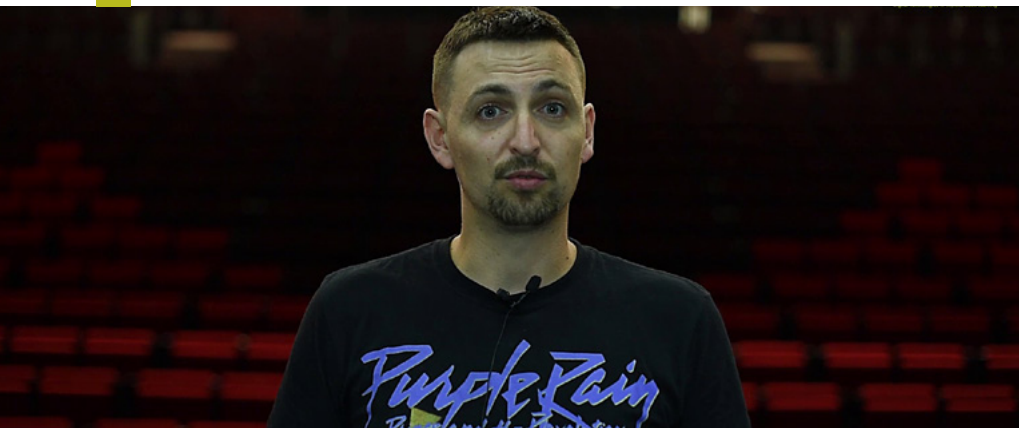




Case studies

“Connect young people with active professionals”

cultural education | classroom teaching | coaching | NEETs



François Friquet and DJ VeX

DJ and producer, Rocher de Palmer / Musiques de Nuit, Bordeaux, France



François Friquet is the coordinator of Forum du Rocher, who works with professionals like DJ VeX (Romain Bascans) to use culture and music to connect with “invisible” residents of some of Bordeaux’s most underprivileged areas. These are often young people who aren’t using more conventional support and training schemes.

To do this they introduce learners to digital tools used by creative professionals, such as computers, photo and video cameras, audio recording and microphones, and MIDI keyboards. Alongside these tools, the techniques and software are explained, including DJ-ing tools and computer assisted music-making. These tools require a good knowledge and can be expensive, which can be a problem when setting up adult education programmes. On the other hand, these are practical tools that stimulate creativity and connect young people (who don’t usually have access to this type of tool) with active professionals. “The tools are surprisingly easy to use once learners have understood the basics.”

Forum du Rocher organises group workshops with various specialist professionals as facilitators. The workshops are based on learning by doing, making use of the equipment available to learn, practice and hone new skills. A two-month digital training is organised twice a year, with an intensive two day and one week workshop once a year. Extra activities are organised whenever possible according to demand.

It was a logical step to use digital tools “because they are useful everyday tools” for creatives, attract and engage a different audience and also create opportunities for sessions to be led by active professionals. Friquet always works with other professionals who facilitate the

workshops on their area of expertise (graphic designer, web designer, photographer, videographer, sound-designer, DJ etc.). “Even if I have some basics, the tools are too technical and specific for me to be able to give the training myself,” says Friquet, but sees this as a real advantage rather than a problem. This way of working introduces learners to new careers which they may not have previously been aware of, and gives them the chance to work with professionals in their fields.

Feedback from learners has been overwhelmingly positive. Some prefer certain tools over others (sound vs. video, graphics vs. web creation), but they realise the advantage of being versatile on these tools (whatever their project) and are therefore motivated to learn how they work. They are more independent on these tools and improve their self-confidence. However, they are sometimes put off by how expensive many of the tools are, making them less relevant to their particular circumstances.

Friquet understands these concerns, but feels that “it is necessary to be trained on these professional tools, if not on free software which can achieve the same results.” The most important thing is “to start from the desires and skills of these young people.” DJ VeX also notes that “the exchange between trainers and young people is very important: learn by doing!” His top tip for trainers who are interested in running similar activities is to have a list of simple tools and (if possible, free!) software with simple examples so that you can give practical advice and facilitate whatever project a learner want to complete.

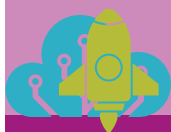
“Help learners discover the tools they already have”

social outreach | integration | classroom teaching | coaching | newcomers

Sophie

Metsemakers

Social Coordinator, La Colline Social Centre, Cenon, France



Sophie Metsemakers is a social coordinator at the La Colline Social Centre in the city of Cenon, near Bordeaux, France. She uses digital tools in her everyday work with the people who come to the social centre, helping them to get used to the websites and apps they need to interact with government agencies and other organisations. Alongside limited digital skills, many of the people who Sophie works with don't speak French, a language barrier which digital tools can help to bridge.

Sophie uses both computers and tablets with users at La Colline “because these are tools used daily by our beneficiaries.” However, Sophie finds the tablet to be the most useful digital tool in her arsenal. “The tablet is chosen because people often have a smartphone where they can install the same applications.” This allows learners to get used to a certain app, tool or website at the social centre and then pick up easily where they left off at home. They also become used to navigating the mobile version of a website, rather than being faced with an entirely different layout after first using a website on a computer. In this way they learn to use the tools they already have.

La Colline works with individuals and groups in practical workshops, very much focused on learning by doing. They show learners how certain digital government services work, for example the job centre (Pôle Emploi) or the social and housing benefits agency (la CAF), explaining their apps and website. This can sometimes be frustrating, as the different administrative platforms work in different ways and use different symbols and pictograms, making it harder for users who don't speak

French. The idea is to help learners gain autonomy by teaching them how to navigate these administrative platforms themselves.

Sophie facilitates sessions with digital tools herself, and makes sure to place herself in the position of the people she's helping when explaining how things work. “The tablet is easy to use, just take the time to test different applications, put yourself in the place of people.” The tablets also allow for various workshop setups, increasing Sophie's flexibility to adapt to the needs of learners. Sophie also finds training and tutorials on how to facilitate sessions very helpful; “they allow you to discover how it works and then adapt your facilitation according to the audience.”

Smartphones and tablets

Mobile devices can be a great way to bring digital tools into the classroom- and show students how to use the tools they already have at home, just like Sophie does here. WiFi is essential though!



The presence of digital tools in adult learning will increase in the coming years, Sophie thinks. “The use of digital tools will be extended and will effectively complement learning. Perhaps the text to audio will be further developed.” The Coronavirus pandemic has also accelerated the uptake of digital tools: “The need for mastery of digital tools is more and more significant and the isolation situation linked to the Covid-19 virus will probably exacerbate the situation.”

“No need to know everything, just be curious”

creative education | classroom teaching | coaching | young people



Violette Aymé

*Co-founder and coordinator,
Le Nom Lieu, Bordeaux,
France*



Violette Aymé works at Le Nom Lieu, using digital tools to work with young people (ages 16 to 25) in situations of mental distress or social breakdown, as well as the social and medical professionals who work with them. By training young people in the latest digital tools and professional software they equip them with valuable skills for the workplace and their own personal development.

Le Nom Lieu uses a variety of digital tools: computers, smartphones, tablets, video and photography cameras, as well as audiovisual software. This is in part because these are everyday tools for the young people they work with. “They are also creative tools that facilitate exchanges,” notes Violette. Indeed, the exchanges which can come about when using digital tools can be far more important than mastery of the tool itself. “The problem is when it works too well... It is often when it does not work well that creativity and dialogue can take hold.”

This approach can be seen throughout Le Nom Lieu’s work with digital tools, and helps to facilitate the relationship between facilitators and learners. “Do not put yourself in the position of the one who knows,” Violette advises, “keep a part of non-mastery and let yourself be taught. No need to know everything, just be curious.”

The training offered to young people is fully tailored to their needs and interests. “Each workshop is different: individually, collectively.” They are managed by specialist facilitators who work with learners using their own tools brought from home and well as the tools which Le Nom Lieu has available. The workshops take place over two half days per week, but for each user the frequency offered is different depending on the project they’re working on.

In general, each young person receives between one and three hours of training per week.

“It is often the young people themselves who know and teach us to use the tools they master. After, we put them in touch with specialized professionals.” Young people very much take the lead in their learning. “The most important thing is not the tool but what learners do with it, how they get it, what it means to them and that is what we support at Le Nom Lieu.”

Digital tools for creativity

Digital tools can be a great way to let learners unleash their creativity and end up with a professional-looking result. Some of the most-used tools for this among professionals are quite expensive and not open source, so think carefully about the level that’s needed for your participants. If the aim is a route to work then skills in, for example, the Adobe Creative Suite may be worth the costs. However, free and open source tools such as Audacity and Canva and built-in tools such as iMovie can still achieve great results!



“More time for complex topics in the classroom”

civil society | sport | classroom teaching | distance learning | volunteers

Steffen Sindulka

Child protection officer in sports clubs, Landessportbund Thüringen e.V., Erfurt, Germany



Steffen Sindulka works for the Landessportbund Thüringen as a child protection officer for sports clubs, offering training and qualifications on child protection for sports club managers. Using a digital method called edubreak® sport campus (developed by Ghostthinker GmbH), Steffen is able to work with learners in a blended learning format, combining online modules and classroom sessions.

The online modules are based on videos and texts created by the trainers, taught across six modules on different topics. Participants receive a login to use the platform “edubreak® sport campus”. Here they can find modules with different topics and exercises. Each online module consists of a topic, material, and input as well as an exercise. The kind of input is different. It could be a video (maximum 10 minutes), a script to read, links to external videos on YouTube, a book chapter or something else. The exercises also vary: participants write online tests, write blog-comments, create a short video or upload files. By using these different possibilities, the participants are enabled to try different things, and Steffen and his team encourage them to use the digital medium. Participants can read each topic as often as they need, and they can repeat each test until they pass.

During the online course, the trainer can see everything that participants have done and completed. They can see each topic, written tests and material and can correct the exercises. A key feature of the platform is its dashboard where each participant can communicate with the trainer as well as with the other participants. Participants can also write emails to trainers via the platform in case they run into problems. Steffen and his fellow trainers

work closely with the IT-company who developed the platform, including a designated contact person who supports uploading new modules or when difficulties arise. Although the trainer needs more time to teach and help each participant in the an online setting than in the classroom lessons, the trainer can work more flexibly to address individual needs.

Alongside the online training, the course includes meetings on six weekends from Friday to Sunday. Most learners work at the sports clubs they manage during their leisure time. By using the blended learning program, they can reduce the time they have to spend at weekends and are able to work more flexibly on the topics during their free time at home. This also has the advantage of allowing more people to participate in the course at the same time. The flexibility also means that Steffen and his team can offer the course several times a year.

Ironically, perhaps the biggest impact that the use of digital tools has on Steffen’s work is in the classroom. The fact that learners can work on most topics online means that there’s more time in a physical classroom setting for other things, in particular more complicated topics that don’t work quite so well in an online setting. “Some topics are too complicated for using online modules. The participants have too many questions and it is easier to teach them in classroom training, for example when discussing finances and taxes,” says Steffen. “The use of digital tools has many good aspects but nevertheless it is important to offer face-to-face trainings and meetings, too. For learners, a contact person and face-to-face interaction is still necessary.”

“Do a bit of research into what tools are out there”

business training | classroom teaching | digital assessment | SMEs



Canice Hamill
*Teaching and training
consultant, Learning Hub
Belfast, Belfast, UK*



Canice Hamill works as a teaching and training consultant for Learning Hub Belfast, a training organisation in Northern Ireland with a focus on SMEs. Combining both classroom training and online tools, Canice uses a range of digital solutions to improve learners' experiences.

“My background started in the classroom as a trainer,” says Canice. “When everything started to become digitalised it just made sense to incorporate it in our teaching delivery.” Canice and his team soon started to see the advantages of digital tools for their teaching; “We find in a lot of circumstances that digital tools work just as well as face to face teaching techniques...and yet they are a lot cheaper, a lot more convenient both for us and for our adult learners.”



TED Ed

TED-Ed is TED's youth and education initiative. TED is a non-profit devoted to spreading ideas, in the form of short, powerful talks and today covers almost all topics in more than 100 languages.

Canice and his colleagues use a variety of digital tools for different applications, such as Nearpod, WordPress, Kahoot, Mentimeter and Dropbox for some project work. A tool which has been particularly successful is TED Ed, which Canice uses to make online courses. “What we particularly like about TED Ed is its simplicity, while at the same time it's a very powerful tool. It has a video functionality, it has a forum functionality, it has an assessment functionality...plus it's super easy to use.”

TED Ed is part of a new generation of interactive online presentation tools, replacing more static offline software such as PowerPoint. “For anyone venturing into creating their first online course I would certainly recommend TED Ed as it works particularly well. For other digital tools, we really like Nearpod it has a great assessment functionality, is more engaging and interactive than PowerPoint, and while using Nearpod you can get real time feedback from the learners and how they are engaging with the material that is being taught.”

Different aspects of different tools are particularly effective with certain types of learner. “Particularly for younger adults they love Nearpod because they follow the lessons on their phone.” For remote learners, TED Ed seems to be a hit: “The learners are very much engaging with the forum functionality so we get great engagement and feedback through that aspect of TED Ed.” The difference between the two tools? “Think of Nearpod as PowerPoint but only better and think of TED Ed as an absolute beginners guide to creating an online course.”

Always remember that it's not about the tools themselves, but rather what you do with them. “Do a little bit of research of what digital tools are out there. Think of what you want to achieve with the use of the tool, whether it's a form of flipped classroom teaching delivery, whether you want to incorporate it into your student assessment or whether you want to engage the more difficult to reach learners...it is easy to become overwhelmed by the amount of tools on the market, but there are lots of good websites that recommend tools for your needs. So try out one or two and build your confidence and competency from there!”

“Aim for free, tried and tested tools”

language learning | coaching | distance learning | international learners

Danae Florou

Teacher of Greek as a second language, Alpha Beta Greek, Athens, Greece



Danae Florou is a teacher of Greek as a second language at Alpha Beta Greek. She set up the language school herself, and focuses on online learning and immersion into Greek culture. She’s highly active on the site with online engagement through blog posts, social media, and, of course, digital learning.

To successfully teach her students, Danae uses Google Drive to share content, Zoom for video calls and meetings, Slack for forum chats, social media for video trainings. This combination allows her to reduce time and cost for my teaching, reach more people, and do group lessons. She plans her work as following:

“With Google Drive we share documents and forms. And we use Zoom for a face to face meeting or group meetings and lessons.” She points out that Slack comes in handy when working on charts as a group, and that only invited members can work on it. Last but not least Alpha Beta Greek uses social media for their live video as well as for sharing online content.

In the interview she admits that tech problems might arise, but adds that “other than that everything works great.” Digital tools aren’t a solution to everything, however. “I think learners would all prefer to have a live interaction instead of being behind the screen, but it’s a compromise in order to keep up with their learning. The students like it and see the benefits, but they get tired after too much time behind the screen.”

Danae’s advice for fellow teachers is to take advantage of video tutorials when trying to make the most out of online environments. It’s important to remember that you’re doing it to improve the students’ learning. “Only try them out if it works for the students too. Try online

classes and see if this is something they’d like you to implement in your teaching. Also less is more: aim for free tried and tested tools rather than fancy expensive ones.”

Cloud-based solutions

Cloud-based solutions such as Google Drive, which Danae uses with her students, are a great way to share files and resources when working at a distance. Popular commercial services are Google Drive, Dropbox, iCloud and OneDrive. Many educational institutions will have a contract with one or other of these services. Cloud-based working can also be a great way for learners to hand in assignment and work on projects, documents and presentations together.

It’s important to look carefully at the settings on your cloud software to see who can assess what.

When asked about how digital tools might look in the future, Danae answered “I think they’ll be both innovative and closer to ‘traditional’ tools. For example, e-pens to handwrite and draw or paper-like screens. More apps to facilitate human creativity and learning in groups.”

“Allow learners the time to digest what they’re learning”

life coaching | classroom teaching | distance learning | coaching



**Gogo
Papadopoulou**
*Adult educator and coach,
Total Approach, Athens,
Greece*



Gogo Papadopoulou is an adult educator and a life coach based near Athens, Greece. She has been working with students for many years both off- and online and has learnt to use various digital tools in her work. She’s also found that the demand for digital tools has increased enormously in the past few months due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Gogo was an early adopter of digital tools: “I started 30 years ago because my students were bored and lost when using traditional methods, gradually I started using pictures and sounds and I have discovered that this was more engaging as they use all senses.”

In the years since, Gogo has built up an impressive digital toolkit for her teaching, depending on the what the situation requires. Now a vital part of her teaching methods, Gogo uses tools like multimedia and videos, PowerPoints with incorporated links, digital tools for storytelling and comic strips, Zoom, Skype and many more.

Gogo’s top advice is to keep in mind that implementation of digital tools requires good time management and team division. Good time management can come in handy when you encounter a technical issue such as the internet connection malfunctioning - something which still happens more often than you’d think! Good planning can help you avoid situations which get in the way of digital teaching - a malfunctioning microphone, for example, or a link or video which is no longer available.

Learning online can be hard for learners who struggle to maintain focus for a longer period of time, but when used well they can have the opposite effect: using digital tools to can keep students engaged. This is also the

feedback she receives from students: “They are gradually very impressed by how many things they learn and how much fun they had. I have the impression that they feel safer in a digital environment.” However, don’t get too carried away with the number of things you can do with your new digital tools and become overambitious: “It’s still important to allow learners the time to digest what they’re learning.”

Once you’ve made sure that you and your learners are properly equipped to go digital, digital tools can be a real asset to adult educators: “The most important advantage is accessibility - you can include people from everywhere. It is less expensive; it’s a great way to reach young people and there are a lot of materials already available. It is also more relaxing and less physically demanding for the trainers if they don’t have to travel all the time.”

Most of Gogo’s digital skills are self-taught – she researched and experimented with digital tools herself in 80% of her encounters with them. Only around 20% of the tools she uses were mastered during a course to learn about one new feature or another, or discovered through colleagues. A tool which has started to play a bigger role in Gogo’s teaching is animation - a great way to explain complicated concepts simply.

Gogo recommends good organisation of their e-materials and preparing well for the lesson no matter whether you’re teaching online or offline. As she says, “This will help them make their online lessons easier. Keep one version as a draft and then use it anytime by adapting it to any new context.”

She believes that we haven’t yet reached the point where we can harness all of our creativity digitally. However, who knows what the future holds?

“Give it a try, don’t be put off by the luddites!”

health and social outreach | classroom teaching | workshops | communities

Julie Jamieson

Chief Executive, New Lodge and Duncairn Community Health Partnership, Belfast, UK



Julie works as a chief executive for the New Lodge and Duncairn Community Health Partnership, based in Belfast, UK. She’s found that a number of digital tools can really help her in her community outreach and teaching activities, such as Kahoot!, Mentimeter, Nearpod and YouTube. The right digital tools can help when trying to get your point across to a sometimes challenging target group.

Julie started to take interest in digital tools when working on a project called Healthy Social Media. “We were very conscious of the fact we didn’t use any digital tools in our programmes, we were quite old-school community workers.” Previously they had used more basic presentation tools such as PowerPoints, but this was not as interactive and engaging as she would have liked. “We realised from Healthy Social Media that we could incorporate tools such as Kahoot! and Mentimeter very easily into our work... so we did and it was great!” Julie now has many more projects where she uses digital tools: “For example we use them for teaching parents the effects of social media.”

Julie went into the learning process aware of her own insecurities around digital tools. “I am not technologically minded and I would panic a bit when it came to using the digital tools!” However, she soon found that tools like Kahoot! or Mentimeter are “easy to use and pretty self-explanatory once you learn about them.” For many adult educators introducing digital tools to your work can feel quite daunting, and in Julie’s case it took someone to introduce her to the tools. This was later followed by group work on how to use them, with a lot of research on her own as well. “It’s been great for me, a real eye

opener, and it’s good to feel confident to actually use the tools as beforehand I would not have felt that way.”

Julie has learnt from experience not to expect everything to work at a teaching location in exactly the same way they do at the office: “The only issue we have is when we are in schools and we had to go through C2K (a computer security system) which meant YouTube clips would have had to be uploaded prior otherwise they would have been blocked.” Preparation and good communication with the school or organisation where you’ll be delivering training is key.

Kahoot!

Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform. Its learning games, “Kahoots”, are user-generated multiple-choice quizzes that can be accessed via a web browser or the Kahoot app. It’s a fun way to test learners’ knowledge.



Kahoot! is one of Julie’s go-to tools. “Kahoot! goes down really-really well...the music is very funky; learners only have 20 seconds to answer and they like the facility of feedback in between the questions. It is great for engagement and is really a great conversation starter for groups as people get involved right away. It does a lot of work in a very short period of time.”

When asked for advice to other tutors, Julie recommends taking the time to get to know the tool. “Then you will see a result and I think that is a great thing! Give it a try, don’t be put off by the luddites! Give everything a go.”

“The most important thing is still the content”

intercultural learning | classroom teaching | distance learning | newcomers



**Dr. Manfred
Niedermayer**
*Freelance digitalisation
consultant, BOMkids, Erfurt,
Germany*



Dr. Manfred Niedermayer is a freelance digitalisation consultant, currently working on the European Social Fund project BOMkids, which aims to boost intercultural skills for migrant children in vocational education using a mix of offline and digital tools. A key digital resource is the project’s online learning area with animated learning scenarios.

The BOMkids project (Berufliche Orientierung für Migrantenkinder in Thüringen - Vocational guidance for migrant children in Thuringia) has two main goals: supporting vocational guidance professionals by profiling intercultural skills, and simplifying, adapting and digitalising of intercultural tools for vocational guidance. The project does this by organising classic seminars alongside the open learning area on the project homepage. The virtual learning area is freely accessible to make the offer as low-threshold as possible. As well as animated learning scenarios, the virtual learning area provides additional material and a project database.

“Interculture” means interaction of a minimum of two different cultures and is an increasingly important topic in the world of adult education. In terms of teaching and learning, the challenge is to present the content appropriately; how to design the learning offer to reach and keep participants engaged despite a complex and sometimes challenging topic.

This is where the digital learning opportunities come into play. With the help of animations, you create a “theatre effect” which can help explain situations more clearly. At the same time, animations attract attention. The willingness of learners to stay on topic increases and they want to know what will happen next. Based on

these animated scenarios you can explain complicated topics which can otherwise be difficult to tackle.

In the BOMkids virtual learning area, animated videos on various relevant everyday topics (e.g. Ramadan, canteens and religious diets) are available. The user can watch these videos independently. In addition, there are tips and further information on the particular subjects.

Animated videos attract attention, and get across a lot of information in a small space of time. However, this is can also be a disadvantage if you’re not careful, reducing complicated themes to something shallow and flashy. The balance between making attractive and attention-grabbing animations and explaining the content in a meaningful way is the core challenge in making these kinds of digital tools – but they can be very rewarding. Manfred advises those making use of animation tools to pay attention to structure, plausibility and staging - “It has to be believable for the user.”

In addition, professional software is often very expensive and many educational projects are limited in their scope, budget and duration due to their project status. Unfortunately, there is also structural and personal resistance to digitalisation in the target group of the project (especially teachers, trainers, transition coordinators and career counsellors).

“I am still learning a lot about new software tools, their possibilities and special features.” Manfred says. It’s easy to get carried away by the special effects and features, so Manfred has a mantra to bear in mind whenever you’re creating digital learning materials: “Content is king. Despite all the digital possibilities, the most important thing is still the content.”

“Start slowly and integrate a few tools at a time”

business training | classroom teaching | coaching | start-ups | SMEs

Samuel Marshall

Business trainer, Banbridge Enterprise Centre, Banbridge, UK



Samuel Marshall, a business trainer at Banbridge Enterprise Centre, delivers a number of start-up business training programmes using digital tools. Their most used tool is Nearpod, which they have started using in the past year. According to Samuel, “Nearpod is very interactive, engaging and participants so far have found it very beneficial.”

Samuel’s adventures in digital teaching all started when one of their funded programmes called ‘Exploring Enterprise’ asked them to try and introduce technology-enhanced learning to the project and its delivery. Samuel and his colleagues explored some of the different options on the market and found Nearpod, one of a number of tools they decided to try out. After the company implemented it in teaching small groups, Samuel found it very interactive, engaging and useful. “The participants found it a little bit different from boring PowerPoint slides and they liked to interact with the polls and collaboration boards.”

Samuel found Nearpod easy to get started with: “There are a lot of user guides, YouTube clips and webinars making it easy to get to grips with. Effectively with Nearpod you can take PowerPoint slides and upload them, then add activities such as quizzes, polls and collaboration boards which are useful to get participants to engage in. You can keep the answers anonymous or post the participants’ names. The report at the end of the session is very useful as well, and you can see who has answered the question. It gives those who are quiet and usually wouldn’t speak out in class a chance to give a response. That way you can see if the material is being understood or not.”

Of course, every technology comes with its pros and cons “Nearpod has some advantages as it is very interactive and the participants can use their smart phones, tablets or laptops to interact with the trainer. It is also free and you can import all of your information and slides. It is also online, so if you don’t have PowerPoint on a particular laptop you can actually just go online as long as you have an internet connection.” However, there are some drawbacks as well: the most common one when it comes to digital tools is being dependent on an internet connection. It is important to keep in mind that not only the tutor should have internet, but the whole class as well.

Participants at Samuel’s trainings enjoy working with tools as Nearpod, Padlet or Socrative as it makes the lesson fun and engaging. Samuel himself says that “it is something different and engaging, it breaks up a lesson so it’s not just sitting looking at a screen all the time at slides, learners are actually engaging and interacting as the lesson progresses.” To not overwhelm yourself and the students, Samuel’s top tip is to start slowly and integrate of a few of the tools at a time. “For example with Nearpod, maybe to start with don’t use it in all of the lessons you plan to do, just so you can become familiar with it and get feedback from participants to see what works and what doesn’t work. Then over time you will get better and can use some of the more advanced features.”

With Nearpod working well for Banbridge Enterprise Centre, they are looking into more tools to incorporate into tutoring. They are currently planning to test Socrative and Kahoot! as a way to add quizzes and to explore Nearpod further and learn how to do drawing and collaboration.

“Always listen to what participants want to learn”

eLearning | classroom teaching | distance learning | educators



Sarantis Manoudis
Web developer and adult educator, web2social, Athens, Greece



Sarantis Manoudis is a distance learning tools developer and author of eLearning materials, based in Athens. He organises workshops teaching digital tools to participants, many of whom do not speak Greek. “They are tools needed in every instance of our lives,” he says, which makes digital tools a vital part of adult education. Moodle is the eLearning platform that Sarantis most often uses when creating materials for learners.

“Distance education has changed the way we teach and learn,” says Sarantis. “Modern technologies have brought a huge change in the way in which the content of a course is produced, taught, discussed and shared.” Moodle is a good example of this – it’s a digital platform which can be used to deliver any kind of learning materials. It’s open source and free, which makes it particularly attractive to adult educators who don’t always have access to budgets for developing their own digital solutions.

The open source nature of Moodle also empowers educators to create their own courses which are fully tailored to the needs of their learners and their course. “Online courses on the platform are easy to set up and be renewed,” Sarantis says, hopefully reassuring educators who are worried about taking their first steps with the platform. “It also makes learning materials more accessible for students, allowing them to study more often or at their own pace.” This gives students the freedom to review materials they found tricky, or to spend less time on topics they already feel comfortable with.

Working via a platform like Moodle also has benefits for educators when it comes to evaluation and tracking their

students’ progress. “It reduces the tracking time of one course by 25 to 60 percent compared to more traditional ways of monitoring.”

Sarantis puts this to the test in his workshops, which take place two days a week and last for a few months. During the workshops he introduces learners to a new digital tool each week, allowing participants to learn by doing. “The good part is when everything goes well and everybody has fun. It doesn’t work quite so well when there are problems with connectivity or when people quit at the first problem that encounter.” However, most students are excited by the possibilities their new digital tools offer: “They are excited to discover ‘new worlds.’”

The needs of learners remain at the heart of teaching, no matter which digital or analogue tool you’re using. “Always listen to what participants want to learn. Find out their skills and adopt the tools that will work best for them.”

Moodle

Moodle is the world’s most popular learning management system. It’s used by educational institutions such as schools and universities around the world to power their digital learning environments. Moodle is provided freely as open source software, which means that anyone can adapt, extend or modify Moodle for both commercial and non-commercial projects.



“Don’t be afraid of digital tools, it is easier than you think”

professional qualifications | classroom teaching | distance learning

Sylva Müller

Project and regional manager, LEB Thüringen e.V., Weimar, Germany



Sylva Müller works for the LEB Thüringen, the regional adult education provider, as a project and regional manager. One of the services they offer is qualifications for day care professionals who work with children. Although these qualifications normally take place face-to-face, during the COVID-19 lockdown Sylva had to find alternative ways to deliver training, and landed on alfaview®.

“Due to the limitations on face to face learning we searched for a digital alternative,” Sylva explains. “Other providers of adult education had had good experiences using alfaview® for learning purposes,” says Sylva when explaining why she chose to use the software. “First, I used it myself as a participant, but this tool is quite easy to use – it has a clearly, well-arranged user interface. Once it has been introduced, you can use it yourself.”

Sylva quickly found ways to use the tool when delivering her training for day care professionals. “We use alfaview® within the qualification on a regular basis in combination with compulsory-attendance lectures. The video conference tool is used for discussions, summaries of learning units, evaluation of tutorials, consultation, and even presentation of new learning units.” Participants receive an invitation link from the trainer, and after a short registration process, they have access to a dedicated video conference room. However, the tool is not entirely web-based – participants have to download the app before they can use it.

This did cause some reservations among learners who are cautious about downloading apps and software onto personal devices. The fact that it’s a less familiar video conferencing tool (unlike for example Zoom or Skype)

also put learners off. A serious barrier to distance online learning is also the poor internet connections in rural regions of Thuringia, although this would be the case no matter which online tool you choose. All in all, however, participants gave positive feedback on alfaview®, finding it easy to use and good video quality, despite being an unskilled and inexperienced target group. “Some participants do not even have an e-mail address,” Sylva notes.

alfaview® does have some considerable advantages over other video conferencing software for teaching. “The trainer is able to arrange a chat room and also to install mini chat rooms (for working in smaller groups), and only the admin has the permission to enter every chat room,” says Sylva, making it a good tool for discussions and presentations. It is also free to use over a specific period for educational institutions. However, alfaview® is not a total solution for online training: “It’s only a communication tool, therefore the use for learning purposes is limited (e.g. to provide material you need a cloud-based solution).”

Adapting teaching to the COVID-19 lockdown was a steep learning curve for Sylva, but it’s given her some valuable insights for the future. “Get an overview of existing tools, and use feedback and experiences from other educators: Which tool is useful and suitable for which purpose?” It’s also important to weigh considerations like data protection, and the costs and benefits of certain tools. Whichever tool you go for, “allow yourself time to test the tool and define rules of use and communication with participants at the beginning.” This sounds complicated, but Sylva remains positive: “Don’t be afraid of digital tools, it is easier than you think!”

“Decide first what you want and then how digital tools can help”

eLearning | classroom teaching | educators | language learning



Jan Douwes

Educational developer and trainer, Afûk, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands



Jan Douwes is an educational developer and trainer at Afûk, the main educational organisation for the Frisian language, the second official language of the Netherlands which is spoken in the northern province of Friesland. Jan is in charge of Afûk’s own digital learning platform, EduFrysk, an online resource for those learning the Frisian language, from preschool all the way up to adult education.

Afûk was an early adopter of digital teaching, which is one of the reasons why they decided to develop their own platform back in 2006. “We chose to build our own platform because at that time there was no system that met our needs. We wanted to have the flexibility and the ability for teachers to create their own lessons and share them with other teachers.”

Since then, EduFrysk has expanded and improved. “At first we only used EduFrysk for adult education. In 2013, the question arose whether we could also transfer our resources for primary education into a digital version.” The different versions and additions to EduFrysk since its first inception had become complicated and unwieldy, so the rethink was an opportunity to simplify. “We also chose to completely rearrange EduFrysk last year. Not cutting back on quality, but finding the balance to make sure that as many people as possible can use of it.” Indeed, the structure behind EduFrysk has now been made available to other organisations and is used as a learning environment for schools and colleges far beyond Friesland.

Afûk serves a wide range of learners, especially in adult education, and therefore offer a mix of digital and physical lessons whenever possible. “EduFrysk is

always used as a supplement to our usual classes. This was a conscious choice because not all our learners are comfortable working digitally.” However, having digital resources available makes learning more flexible, especially for those who want to invest extra time. “That is why we have digitized all our course books and we also offer more materials via the platform. So not only the assignments from the books, but also extra materials such as videos, stories, texts. So that way learners enrich the course for themselves.”

Having their resources available digitally was incredibly helpful in 2020, when physical classes had to be suspended due to Coronavirus. “With the arrival of Corona we also had to switch and we chose to do a number of the courses online. We opted for Jitsi, a platform on which you can easily meet online. Students could access their learning materials and do their homework for each week via EduFrysk, then discuss it later in the group course with the teacher.”

When choosing new tools, like Jitsi, it’s important to be strategic. “If you choose a tool for meeting online, for example, then stick to the same tool for all online meetings. This ensures that it is clear not only for you and your colleagues but also for learners: they become familiar with the tool. This is very important to ensure that they are not drowning in too many different devices, too many different possibilities, but rather become comfortable with one digital tool and have more room for learning.”

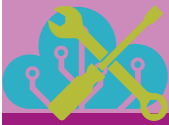
Jan’s top tip for other digital educators? “Very often a digital resource, a digital tool, is seen as an end in and of itself. It is much better to map out in advance what you want to achieve and how digital resources can contribute to this, as a means rather than a goal.”

“You can see how long someone’s watching, what they click on next...”

coaching | workshops | newcomers | language learning | social outreach

Kevin de Groot

Coach and founder, Ons Kruispunt, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands



After becoming a mentor to Daniel, a young man from Eritrea, through a mentoring organisation in Friesland, Kevin de Groot realised that he could put his degree in business administration to better use by starting social company Ons Kruispunt to help newcomers to the Netherlands adapt to their new home. He works with a wide range of informal adult learners, and has had to make new steps in reaching out to its users digitally during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Before Corona I was mainly coaching one-on-one, and occasionally creating larger group workshops and training if the same issue or topic was coming up again and again.” The connection between newcomers in these sessions was also very important: “connecting people together, that’s a huge part of what I do.”

When the first wave of Corona came, everything came to a standstill. “Volunteer work, internships, jobs, running your own business – all the daily things that newcomers do which brings them in contact with Dutch people came to a halt.” Kevin’s clients started noticing that their language level in Dutch was declining, and they couldn’t meet face-to-face for a good two to three months. “That was difficult because, especially for people who don’t speak Dutch as their first language, it is important to see each other and pick up on body language. The solution was to go digital.”

This doesn’t have to involve complicated tools. “To make it digital I just used Skype. It’s a tool that many of the people I work with were already comfortable with, so we were able to do the one-on-one conversations there, but also group conversations.” Kevin started a podcast to reach out to newcomers. “I would invite a newcomer to

do a 15 minutes interview as a video podcast, tell his or her story, and try and make connections with others who are going through the same thing.” It was important to use video rather than audio so that viewers could follow the non-verbal cues.

Once again, the tools for putting together the podcast were simple. “I just used Skype. We could make recordings very easily.” The videos were then posted on YouTube, which also allowed Kevin to see how users were engaging with his videos. “I saw in my 15 minute videos that almost no one watched the full thing, snippets or maybe 5 to 10 minutes but never entirely, so I in the future I want to create shorter videos. And that was nice about working online: you got feedback, because you can see via YouTube how long someone is watching, and what kind of video they clicked on afterwards, so that is very handy. I learnt a lot.”

The comments on his videos were also helpful. “For one video I decided not to be the interviewer myself but to let someone who speaks Tigrinya do so to reach a different audience. So in that episode two guests had a discussion in Tigrinya, and it really took off. We got around 1200 views on the video when most of the others got around 200, 300. So clearly there’s a demand for these kinds of materials.”

These new ventures into digital means of reaching newcomers – Kevin also organised online cook-alongs, quizzes – have expanded Ons Kruispunt’s toolkit, but will never fully replace offline interactions. “I think when things go back to normal there will be a shift to more digital settings, but 75% will still be offline, and roughly 25% online. The people I work with still need that face-to-face contact, but they can learn a lot online and that also prepares them for the digital skills you’re expected to have in a Dutch workplace.”

“Take it seriously and really invest the time”

classroom teaching | distance learning | newcomers | strategy | educators



Ashwin Brouwer

*Innovation supervisor,
Friesland College,
Leeuwarden, The
Netherlands*



Ashwin Brouwer is an innovation supervisor at the vocational Friesland College in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, which offers both vocational training to students fresh out of school and training for adult learners from different backgrounds. “I am mainly focused on promoting digitisation within Friesland College, both with my colleagues and the way we teach, but also in how we work more generally.”

Friesland College has been working on digitisation for a while now, with Ashwin playing an important role. In 2017 the college became the first school in the Netherlands to start using the video calling and messaging service Microsoft Teams, for example, and Ashwin and his colleagues have organised various small interventions to move the needle on all things digital within the college. “For example, we decided to reduce printing by working digitally, first of all by asking students to bring a laptop, but also by training colleagues in how to accept assignments handed in digitally, via Microsoft Teams. So you save a lot of printing paper, and best of all you don’t have to carry those very heavy bags that you normally have to take home at the end of the day as a teacher!”

This early adoption of video calling proved incredibly helpful in 2020 with the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic. “We really did reap the benefits. Because we had been working on Microsoft Teams since 2017, for example, we were able to make a relatively quick switch to fully online education in March. Not that we want to continue with fully online learning once this is over. The combination of physical, practical and online is something we believe in for the future of our education.”

The tools used by Friesland College range from the

relatively simple – Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Kahoot! – to the high tech. “We started working with mixed reality two years ago using the hololens. We first used it for construction and design students, so that they can make their work in a digital program and then actually walk through it using the hololens. So they can experience, without having to actually build something, what it’s like to walk through their own building.” This investment has now paid off for other courses: “Our healthcare training will be using it for anatomy and physiology classes. If you want to learn how to stop someone bleeding you can’t really grab a volunteer and whip out a knife, for example, but with mixed reality you can give students a realistic experience to learn from.”

However, Ashwin says that you don’t need to have all of the resources that Friesland College has in order to get going with digital tools. “But do take it seriously and really invest the time. You don’t have to throw big budgets at it right away, but first decide what you want to achieve and always put your educational goals first.”

Not all of Ashwin’s colleagues are immediately excited about new digital tools, but he builds on the enthusiasm of colleagues that are by giving them the role of “Media Coach” within the organisation. “We have about 25 Media Coaches, who are colleagues who like to work with ICT, who like to explore what they can do with it, to experiment and to try new things, and who most importantly enjoy helping their colleagues with new digital tools and skills.” This really helps encourage educators to try using new digital tools. “Not by preaching, but just by showing them what’s possible.”

Ashwin’s top tip for educators who are new to using digital tools is to start slow. “Choose one thing you’d like to work on instead of trying to do everything all at once.” And just because you’re using a digital tool doesn’t

necessarily mean it's improving your teaching – it can be easy to forget the basics of connecting with students, asking how their day was etc. when teaching online. “So all those kinds of things that we would otherwise take for granted, we have to think through and consciously plan.”

Indeed, not all digital tools work for all groups – something that Ashwin has particularly noticed at FCEExtra, the part of the organisation that focuses on adult education, lifelong learning and integration of newcomers. “It is

important to have the connection and to enter into the relationship, but adult learners are very busy people! They have a household, they have a job and they make an extra investment in themselves through learning. So what they really want is the content! To get their diploma in a way that suits them best and suits their schedule. That is why we are also committed to making education more flexible through digital tools, so that you can achieve the same in several ways.”





Putting DIGITAL into practice: practical steps

Now that we've heard from adult educators from across Europe, what have we learnt? And how can we put their advice into action in our own teaching? To make that easier, we've compiled the best practical tips and tricks from our experts.

Start slow

With the huge number of digital tools out there, it can feel pretty overwhelming to get started. The top tip for this from our adult educators was to start slow – try integrating one or two digital tools into your teaching and build up from there. “Try out one or two digital tools and build your confidence and competency from there!” says Canice Hamill from The Learning Hub, Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Be strategic

A piece of advice that came up time and again was to be strategic when integrating digital tools into your teaching – this one applies both to educators and to policy-makers and management of teaching organisations. “Ask yourself what you want to achieve in terms of teaching, and then see if digital tools can help you get there,” says Ashwin Brouwer from Friesland College in the Netherlands.

“Ask yourself what you want to achieve in terms of teaching, and then see if digital tools can help you get there”

It's also good to be strategic when choosing which digital tools you use – try to use one tool for each function, rather than expecting learners to

constantly learn new tools and interfaces, and agree on this list of tools with your colleagues. It will also help fellow educators who are less comfortable with digital tools to not feel overwhelmed!

Put learners first

It's easy to get carried away by all the possibilities that digital tools can offer, but it's always helpful to take a step back and think about who you're doing it all for: the learner. Any digital tools you introduce into your teaching should be there to improve the learning experience of your students and participants, or be tools that they need for their professional lives.

Put yourself in the position of the learner

Putting yourself in the position of the learner as a thought exercise can help you make sure you're choosing the right tools for the right learners, but it can be equally helpful to more literally put yourself in the position of the learner by allowing your students to teach you new digital skills and admitting that you don't know everything! This is particularly helpful when working with younger learners who are potentially more tech-savvy than you. By allowing learners to take on a teaching role, they'll grow in confidence and will have to think through the way they work digitally in order to be able to explain it. “There's no need to know everything, just be curious!” is Violette Aymé's top tip, based on her work with young people at Le Nom Lieu in Bordeaux, France.

Get creative

Digital tools can give you the opportunity to unleash your creativity and allow learners to express themselves. Various adult educators use digital tools for film-making, music and DJing, game design etc. to give participants means of self-expression, particularly learners from more vulnerable backgrounds. Learning how to use these tools also

gives them a boost if they opt for a future in the creative industries.

Getting creative doesn't have to limit itself to artistic work, however. Digital tools also offer adult educators the chance to get creative with their teaching and the way they structure their lessons. This was especially true when much of Europe's education went online in 2020 during the lockdowns due to the Coronavirus pandemic: digital tools offered various ways to keep learners active, even if they were sitting at home behind a screen.

“About 80% of my digital skills are self-taught”

Take the time to experiment

Something that almost all of the adult educators who told their story in this guide have in common is that they experiment with digital tools themselves before integrating them into their teaching. Trying out new things independently, maybe finding a YouTube tutorial or a handbook online to help you on your way, and just seeing what you can achieve. Indeed, most adult educators have taught themselves how to use their digital tools, rather than in some kind of class or training. “About 80% of my digital skills are self-taught,” says Gogo Papadopoulou from Total Approach in Athens, Greece.

Explore what's out there

With so many digital tools out there, it's helpful to explore your options and find the tools that best suit your needs. It's good to bear in mind the budget you have available, as well as the devices (will you be using it on a smartboard or just a projector? Do most of your students have laptops, or is a smartphone more accessible?) and also to consider the skills of your colleagues and how much support they may need in learning how to use the tool. Another key consideration is data protection – a top tip is to

check whether the digital service stores its data in the EU or not. Ashwin Brouwer from Friesland College in the Netherlands, for example, explains why they chose to offer Kahoot! as a digital tool: “We offer Kahoot! Premium to our teachers. It's a European company, which means we can be sure that everything is in accordance with GDPR and we don't have to worry about data protection.”

Consider open-source vs. professional tools

For almost every function there's a paid and an open-source / free digital tool available. As (adult) educational organisations across Europe tend to run on limited budgets, it's tempting to always choose the free option – and that's very often a perfect choice! But sometimes it is worth considering professional software, especially if the aim of your teaching is to prepare learners for a career where they'll be expected to use it. François Friquet from Le Rocher du Palmer in Bordeaux, France, uses these professional tools to connect young people and creative professionals: “it is necessary to be trained on these professional tools, if not on free software which can achieve the same results.” Very often there are educational discounts or even free options for educators, making professional tools slightly more accessible than they may appear.

However, very often free or open-source tools will work just as well, and the chances are that learners will already be familiar with them. Danae Florou from Alpha Beta Greek in Athens advises adult educators to “aim for free tried and tested tools rather than fancy expensive ones.” She herself uses Google Drive to make resources available to students, social media to share motivational resources in a different way, and Zoom for video calls. Kevin de Groot from Ons Kruispunt in the Netherlands also opted for free tools when his work went digital during lockdown. “I just used Skype!”

Make use of different devices

Digital tools take as many forms as there are devices, so it's good to consider which tool will work best on which device and which devices your learners are most likely to use. Sofie Metsemakers from the La Colline social centre in Cenon, France, uses tablets when showing her learners how to access government services digitally. “We use tablets because people often have a smartphone where

they can install the same applications.” Some digital tools will work across multiple devices, a great feature if your learners don’t all have access to the same technology.

Gain feedback and insights

Using digital tools can make it much easier to gain feedback on your teaching activities and bring insights to inform the way you work. Julie Jamieson from the New Lodge and Duncairn Community Health Partnership in Belfast, Northern Ireland uses Kahoot! for this, building feedback moment in between questions. Sarantis Manoudis from KANEP in Athens, Greece uses Moodle to make insights into his students’ learning easier. “It reduces the tracking time of one course by 25 to 60 percent compared to more traditional ways of monitoring.” When Kevin de Groot from Ons Kruispunt in the Netherlands started releasing podcasts on YouTube to keep in touch with his learners, the analytics tools and viewing figures helped him realise that a few adjustments to his materials could make them more relevant to his audience.

“We use tablets because people often have a smartphone where they can install the same applications”

Consider your audience

Not all digital tools are suitable for all learners, and for some groups digital tools simply cannot replace face-to-face contact. However, that doesn’t mean that you have a fully analogue classroom – just that the amount of digital tools used might be less or serve a different function. For example, it can be very valuable for adult educators who help new Europeans to adapt to their new homes to integrate digital tools into their teaching in order to boost the digital confidence of learners. Canice Hamill in Belfast finds that tools which you can access on your smartphone work particularly well with younger learners, for instance. And Manfred Niedermayer

from the BOMkids project in Erfurt, Germany uses digital animations to explain complex topics to participants across language barriers and cultural differences.

Expect the unexpected

Just as with any teaching activity, things sometimes don’t go according to plan with digital tools. It’s good to prepare for these kind of eventualities, as a number of the adult educators featured in this guide point out. Gogo Papadopoulou in Greece recommends good organisation of your e-materials and preparing well for the lesson no matter online or offline. As she says “This will help them make their online lessons more easily. Keep one version as a draft and then use it anytime by adapting it to any new context.” Julie Jamieson in Northern Ireland recommends checking what systems are in place at a school or college if you’re invited to give a guest lesson or workshop – she has to make sure any YouTube videos she wants to use are fully downloaded beforehand as YouTube is blocked by certain schools, for example.

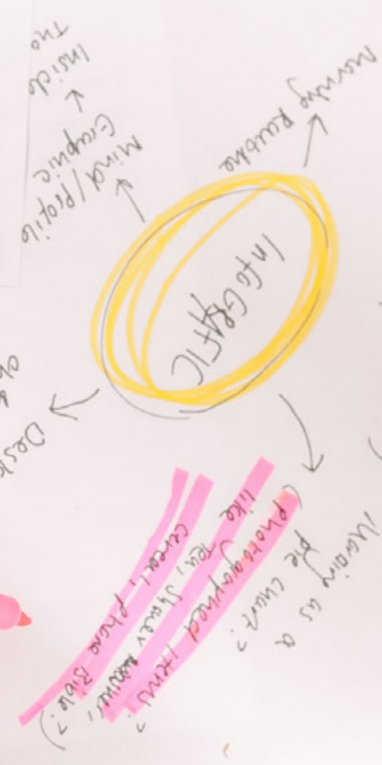
When teaching fully online, expecting the unexpected is even more important as learners’ home environments will have a huge impact on their learning. It’s a good idea to consider what this might mean for adult learners, who often have children, jobs and a busy schedule to juggle alongside their studies. Some learners may not have access to a laptop, for example, or have one laptop which they share with the rest of their household. And a high-speed internet connection can’t always be relied on, especially in rural or isolated areas. During the Covid-19 crisis in 2020 we’ve seen a number of ways to deal with this: planning online classes in the evening when younger children have gone to bed, making laptops or SIM cards with data bundles available to students so they have the tools they need to learn from home, or making lesson materials available so that learners can access them flexibly in their own time.

Adapt to an online setting

If you are teaching in a fully online setting, it’s important to adapt your teaching to make it work digitally. Many of the things we take for granted in a classroom setting need to be carefully considered and planned in a digital setting. Ashwin Brouwer from Friesland College in the Netherlands noticed



Hand Action



VIDEO

MAP

WHEEL

ALERT

KEYBOARD

SEARCH

LISTS

HEADER

giving cities put their tweet

withdraw



this during the transition to online teaching which took place during the first Coronavirus lockdown in March 2020. “If you have a physical class in one of our buildings, do you have a good morning, how are you, you walk around, you have a chat, you joke... Now it’s: you start the video call, you start the lesson, you end the lesson, it’s done. And the funny thing is, those things that we otherwise do physically, we can do online too, just we’re not used to it.”

Just because you’re teaching online doesn’t mean that learners have to remain glued to their webcams – using break-out room functions in video call software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams can allow students to work together on group tasks and interact with one another, rather than just with the educator. Be sure to hang on slightly longer in your call if at all possible, so that learners can approach you individually for questions – in exactly the same way they would in a classroom.

Offer flexible learning

Digital tools offer all kinds of possibilities to make your teaching offer more flexible, something which is particularly relevant for lifelong learning where learners often combine activities with work and family. Steffen Sindulka from the Landessportbund Thüringen in Germany found that offering online modules alongside regular teaching was a real advantage for his learners, who volunteer as managers of their local sports clubs. By following parts of the programme digitally, it gave them more free time and made the programme less of a commitment. Jan Douwes from Afûk in the Netherlands found that offering course content online for adults learning the Frisian language in group courses allowed motivated learners to extend and personalise their learning. Sarantis Manoudis from Greece also finds the flexibility offered by digital learning to be a real advantage. “It makes learning materials more accessible for students, allowing them to study more often or at their own pace.” This gives students the freedom to review materials they found tricky, or to spend less time on topics they already feel comfortable with.

Don’t ignore digital tools

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of digital tools and the various things you can do with them, but don’t be tempted to just ignore digital tools. This also applies to educators working with

groups who aren’t confident digitally. Ultimately as adult educators we want to give our learners the skills they need to succeed in a society, and in the 21st century those skills have to include the ability to work with digital tools. By allowing learners to engage with the digital world in the safety of the classroom, you’ll not only be giving them the tools they need to enhance their learning but also be equipping them for the future.

“Give it a try, don’t be put off by the luddites! Give everything a go.”

Go for it!

Taking the first step can often feel like the biggest barrier for educators who aren’t used to using digital tools in their teaching. “Give it a try, don’t be put off by the luddites! Give everything a go,” is Julie Jamieson’s advice from Northern Ireland. She at first felt intimidated by digital tools, but as her confidence has grown she’s become convinced of their value. Asking a colleague who’s more comfortable with digital tools to demonstrate something that they use when working with learners can be a really helpful first step. This was also the experience of Sylva Müller from LEB Thüringen e.V in Germany: “First, I used the video calling platform myself as a participant. Once it has been introduced, you can use it yourself.”



DIGITAL

Digital Technologies to Improve Adult Learning

LE ROCHER
DE PALMER



Ländliche Erwachsenenbildung Thüringen e.V.



momentum
[educate + innovate]



Learning
Hub
Friesland



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.