LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL ERA: REVOLUTION OR EVOLUTION?

TRAINING PROVIDERS FORUM – WORKSHOP REPORT

Introduction

Online learning, e-Learning, blended learning, social learning. We can be forgiven for (still) getting confused by all these different terms when trying to navigate the digital learning space. The opportunities technology offers to enable learning in the humanitarian and development sector are many, and it can be a challenge to identify the right approach for our capacity building and training programmes.

How to navigate the ever-changing technological landscape to continue delivering relevant and accessible training in? And the jargon that comes with it? What's available, what works for which needs? How do we measure the effectiveness of e-Learning?

On the 12th of June 2017, Bioforce, Bond, CHS-Alliance, Cornerstone OnDemand Foundation, Groupe URD, IECAH, INASP, INTRAC, Mango and RedR UK convened a workshop to explore what is out there and provide some responses to these questions.

The workshop offered NGO Training Providers a space to share experiences and learning with the aim of turning discussions into concrete ideas and takeaways.

This report provides a brief summary of the discussions of the day, with links to the presentations, case studies and useful resources.

*Session 1 | ***Approaches to Online Learning – Ross Coxon, LINGOS**

This session was led by Ross Coxon, LINGOS, who gave an overview on the world of e-Learning, which uses a lot of technical language that can be obstructive and confusing for both learners and facilitators. In addition, focusing on the technical aspects can result in blinkered or binary thinking (right or wrong).
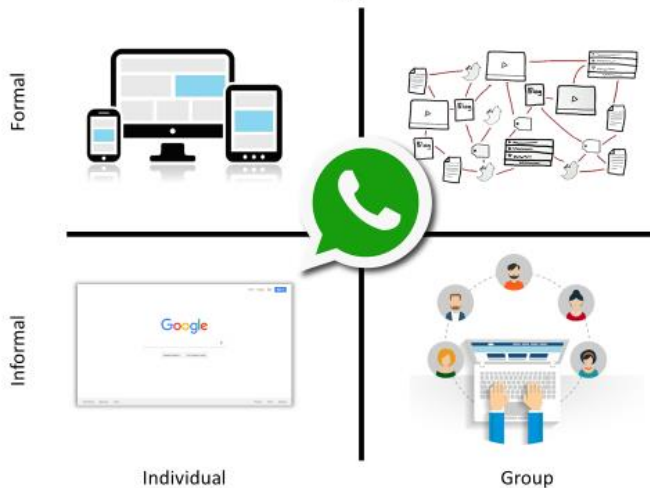
This matrix constitutes an attempt to break through these technical language barriers and create a broader understanding of what is going on and what is possible in e-Learning. There are formal or informal e-Learning options, for individuals or groups, resulting in multiple modalities.

The main components of the model are:

- *Formal individuals*: self-directed, often hosted on an organisational system, such as Learning Management System (LMS). It has been used poorly in the past for compliance training, however there are some good examples, including branching scenarios which allow learners a safe place to fail, and try again (an example can be found here)
- *Formal groups:* webinar, MOOCs, e-Workshops and social learning courses
- *Informal individuals:* YouTube, Google searches, wikis are the most common type of individual learning
- *Informal groups:* informal communities of practice, Facebook groups etc.

Each modality has value in different situations. As training providers, we are mostly involved in formal training, but we can make use of all the different elements and social media, in e-Learning course design and delivery.

Key message: The main focus of e-Learning should remain the learning process, while technology needs to be viewed as a supporting device to this process.

*Session 2 | ***Technology, Tools and Trends**

The second session of our workshop looked at "Technology, tools and trends". As TPF members differs in the level they have integrated e-Learning in their capacity building programmes, this session aimed at providing a range of tools and trends pertinent to e-Learning, drawing on a set of three different stories. These illustrate the myriad of tools and trends out there, and how there is no one-solution fit all. We ought to also recognise that this

is a learning journey for each one of us to identify what works best for our organisation now, and what could be possible options to envisage at a later stage as our ability to embed technology in our learning activities expands.

Contributors - During this session, we heard from *Annelise Dennis*, Capacity Development Approaches Coordinator at [INASP](#), who explained how she furthered her knowledge of the different **tools available to run webinar and support synchronous interactions** so as this could support their learning programmes. What she expected to be a few hours research turned into a more in-depth exploration and she kindly shared her report for those sitting at the beginning of a similar journey – [please see attached [report](#)].

A "**very brief overview of digital badges**" was given by *Markus Forsberg,* Membership Coordinator at [PHAP](#). He touched on the *what, how* and *why*, with some examples to help the audience better understand their added-value and the growing interest in associating them to e-Learning [please see attached [report](#)].

Roisin Cassidy, Digital Learning Manager at [Save the Children UK,](#) then told us how they are integrating a **gaming element** in their Field Manager Development Program. Similarly to the Badge presentation, she shared information about the *what*, *how* and *why*, and showed us some examples of the use of gaming in our sector - [please see attached [report](#)].

Session 3 | E-Learning in practice, lessons learned

In this session, Mango, Cornerstone on Demand Foundation and RedR shared their experiences of developing and delivering three quite different e-Learning programmes.

Mango eWorkshops for finance skills training

Terry Lewis, Director of Learning & Development at Mango, talked about her experience of running eWorkshops. EWorkshops are asynchronous, collaborative workshops that are supported by facilitators. Learners work at their own pace, in their own time, but within set workshop weeks. 'Conversations' take place via discussion forums, and learners complete individual, small group and whole group tasks and receive feedback on their work from the facilitator and/or other participants.

Key learning points for Terry were that the amount of facilitator time required to run an eWorkshop was higher than anticipated, it was important to ensure participants were fully aware in advance of what was involved, you need to provide offline copies of material for those without constant internet access, and that it was preferable to separate their tech support role from the facilitation role [please see the attached [report](#)].

Cornerstone on Demand Foundation – Investing in Syrian Humanitarian Action (ISHA)

Emmanuelle Lacroix, Partnership Development Manager at Cornerstone on Demand Foundation, talked about the ISHA learning programme that is offered through the DisasterReady portal. This offers a series of learning pathways to humanitarians regardless of their location, consisting of e-Learning, mobile courses, videos, simulations, and job aids, available in Arabic and English.

Key learning points for this programme were that many of the popular learning trends were also valid for this programme – so it includes storytelling, microlearning, simulations and social learning, the importance of collaborating with other programmes and organisations to avoid

duplication of content and to make the learning opportunities less overwhelming for learners, the importance of contextualising training and the need to collaborate locally to promote the programme [please see attached report].

RedR – Mission Ready

Kate Denman, Programme Manager at RedR, talked about her experience of designing Mission Ready, a self-paced interactive security training platform designed for aid workers in the field. This uses realistic, 'point-of-view' video simulations to put aid workers in the kind of situations they are likely to face in the field. Leaners must make decisions under time pressure applying newly-acquired knowledge.

RedR partnered with Digital Training Solutions and worked with a steering committee including donors and NGOs to develop this programme. The interactive video simulation proved very engaging for learners, although there were challenges in low bandwidth and the fact that once the video is produced, it is not easy to change. A key learning was that the impact would be stronger if delivered as part of a blended course [please the attached report].

World Café session

During the World Café session, participants discussed some of the challenges and positive aspects of the three case studies (Mango, ISHA, Mission Ready). On a fourth table, participants discussed M&E and Impact of ELearning.

Emmanuelle Lacroix and *Stacy Guidera* from Cornerstone on Demand Foundation looked at some of the challenges of delivering technology-based learning in a conflict zone:

- **Protecting the identity** and whereabouts of learners (only collect email addresses, learners use pseudonyms, do not collect IP addresses so that no-one can see where learners are logging on from).
- **Contextualising content** to make it relevant to learners; and don't forget to pilot with different groups of learners.
- **Working with local Capacity Development team** was important at many levels: translation into Arabic, promoting training offer via local networks, contextualizing content, including real stories, video, photos.
- **Translating training** content into Arabic and adapting an existing platform and templates proved a challenge, especially due to short timeframe.

Kate Denman (RedR UK) answered questions around the challenges of delivering video-based learning:

- Video-based learning is often a quality product and highly engaging for learners but it comes at a **cost**.
- Learners like simulation exercises and there is a **good emotional connection** via video
- **Outsourcing technology** means that even minor changes take time and therefore cost money.
- If technology is outsourced, ensure that the **expectations** of all partners are fully clarified and agreed upon in contract, especially if partners are not from humanitarian background.

We also looked at the pros and cons of doing M&E of e-Learning:

- As for M&E of F2F training, many of same questions apply. It is worth thinking about **the scope of the M&E**, in order to decide where to invest effort. More specifically, it is crucial to consider the budget available for M&E, the target and what we are measuring.
- In terms of impact, one should consider the organisational change and define the kind of **outcome expected** as a result of the learning activity.
- Facilitated e-Learning may provide **greater opportunity for M&E** because of the longer **timeframe and number of people** that are learning in the workplace.
- Some **difficulties** could emerge in evaluating the impact of **self-paced, self-service e-Learning**
  There is **potential opportunities** to **adapt Brinkerhoff's success-case methodology** and storytelling to e-Learning.

Terry Lewis from [Mango](#) explained her experience in promoting learner engagement in e-Learning programmes:

- **Careful design**, relevant and engaging activities, vary individual versus group tasks
- Providing **clear pre-course information** is essential, in other words clarifying exactly what is expected from the learners
- Build **confidence in the online environment**
- Create **a safe space online**, an environment where is it is safe to get it wrong
- Build a **'team' atmosphere**, for instance through teleconference
- **Keep instructions short and remove barriers**, such as difficult passwords and complicated navigation trajectories
- Once learners have built up skills and knowledge and feel comfortable, introduce **peer review** or peer marking, and ensure that marking system and rules are clear.

Session 4 | **Impact of e-Learning: the research**

This session was introduced by *Camille Nussbaum* (IECAH) as an opportunity to discuss insights on measuring the effectiveness of e-Learning approaches. The discussion draw on the study carried out by Bioforce and IECAH with 140 former e-Learning participants. *Rory Downham* (Bioforce) presented the key findings of the research: 1) The application of adult learning principles and methodology in e-Learning clearly has a very positive impact on learning and satisfaction 2) Main motivation for choosing e-Learning is not price, but rather flexibility and access 3) The most technically sophisticated formats, such as video contents, do not seem to be as appreciated as activities that include participant involvement 4) Whilst being particularly appropriate for learning, collaborative peer activities can create tension between participants.

A debate about collaboration and, more generally, participation took place after the presentation. Participants agreed that there is a lot of "collaboration" in training in general (both F2F and e-Learning) that risks being meaningless, for instance, in "group works" where participants always prefer to learn on their own. In a nutshell, adult learning principles and pedagogy are crucial to the impact of e-Learning. Technological tools and collaborative approaches do indeed play an important role, however they are not enough in themselves.

Session 5 | Group discussions

The workshop ended with four small group discussions around specific questions and challenges raised by the participants. *Paula Haddock* (training programme advisor) explored with her group the free technologies available for organisations who need to do e-Learning on a budget. *Iffaf Khan* (RedR) presented the *flipped classroom* concept to participants more interested in the pedagogical aspects of e-Learning. *Aline Filiot* (INTRAC) discussed with another group the issue of costing and pricing online courses compared to F2F courses. *Ross Coxon* (LINGOS) offered advice on the basics of e-Learning for organisations who are just getting started with it. One of their suggestions was to not underestimate the fact that a good e-Learning programme might be made just by a set of YouTube videos.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Dynamind – Online Learning in a Nutshell

Various
Gamificationgeek.com
Kaya MOOC from The HLA
Reinventing organizations by Frederic Laloux
@LnDconnect - Twitter group for L&D people, Twitter chat every Friday at 8 am, UK time

Blogs
https://dynamind-elearning.com/blog/ - Anouk from Dynamind
http://blog.cathy-moore.com/ - e-Learning design
http://dougbelshaw.com/blog/
http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/blog/- Jane Hart, for updates on new technology
http://www.aconventional.com/ - Nick Shackleton-Jones

Trends
Yearly NMC Horizon reports – not NGO sector, but useful for future of tech enhanced learning)
Firetail briefing - monthly email, broad topics
Mozilla Digital Skills Observatory

Digital Tools
Screencast-o-Matic - screencapture videos, free, time limit
Videoscribe - cheap whiteboard animation tool
Moodle - Learning Management System
Zoom - similar to Skype, but can use breakout rooms and whiteboard with it
Appear.in - a screen sharing and sound sharing technology, suitable for smaller groups
Big Blue Button - webinar technology
Slack - getting work done remotely in groups using an online system
Mattermost - an alternative to Slack
Mural.com - free brainstorm tool
Padlet - free brainstorm tool
Elgg - free software, social and private network
Videopad - open source webinar editing software, fade in, fade out etc.
Class dojo.com - social learning platform
Audacity - for multi-track audio recording and editing