TOGETHER OLD AND YOUNG: AN INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH

A Handbook for tutors and course developers

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Acknowledgements

Suggested citation:

TOY-PLUS Consortium (2018) *Together Old and Young – An Intergenerational Approach: A Handbook for Tutors and Course Developers*, Leiden: TOY-PLUS Project.

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Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the Together Old and Young (TOY) Intergenerational Approach Handbook, which provides background information and guidelines for tutors, educators and course developers who wish to provide professional development for adults in intergenerational learning (IGL). The course described in the Handbook is based on the TOY approach to IGL which primarily focusses on young children and older adults. Visit the TOY website **www.toyproject. net** for more information about the TOY Programme, its projects, partners and resources.

1.1   What is intergenerational learning?

Intergenerational learning (IGL) is actually the oldest method of learning. It is informal and multi-generational and typically involves learning that takes place naturally as part of day-to-day social life. A more formal definition of IGL, which captures today's usage of the term is:

"A learning partnership based on reciprocity and mutuality involving people of different ages where the generations work together to gain skills, values and knowledge"[1].

[1] ENIL, European Network for Intergenerational Learning, Report on Intergenerational Learning and Volunteering.
Accessible from **www.enilnet.eu/Dossier_ENIL_EN2.pdf**

The Together Old and Young (TOY) approach to IGL brings young children (0-8) and older adults together to share experiences, have fun, learn from each other and develop meaningful relationships. Intergenerational Learning activities in TOY are friendly and informal social encounters, where children and adults can equally partake as the learner and the teacher.

Why is IGL so relevant and necessary now? Children and older adults are spending more time in age segregated settings such as early childhood education and care (ECEC) centres and care centres for older adults. There is also more migration separating grandparents from grandchildren. These make it difficult to maintain the 'traditional' form of learning between generations. A growing age diversity in society and new family forms means that new approaches and activities are needed to maintain contact between generations.

IGL is now considered an important part of Lifelong Learning. In addition to the transfer and exchange of knowledge, IGL fosters reciprocal learning relationships between different generations as well as helping to develop social capital and social cohesion.

Activities are labelled as Intergenerational Learning when they fulfil the following three criteria:

1. Involve more than one generation

2. Planned as purposeful and progressive, mutually beneficial learning

3. Promote greater understanding and respect between generations and, consequently, community cohesion[2]

Research demonstrates that young children, older adults and the community as a whole benefit by participating in IGL activities[3].

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[2] ENIL, ibid.
[3] TOY Project Consortium (2013) Reweaving the tapestry of the generations: An intergenerational learning tour through Europe, Leiden: The TOY Project; TOY Project Consortium (2013) Intergenerational Learning Involving Young Children and Older People, Leiden: The TOY Project.

1.2   TOY vision and goals

The original Together Old and Young (TOY) project took place in seven countries: Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal between 2012 and 2014. It was unique amongst European intergenerational learning projects with its explicit **focus on children in the early childhood years**. The Project brought together the two ends of the lifelong learning spectrum - early childhood education and activities for older adults. In collaboration with universities, NGOs and municipalities, we researched, documented and supported learning initiatives involving young children and older adults in Europe.

TOY has two overarching goals of (1) improved health and well-being for all generations, and (2) the development and building of age-friendly communities.

Based on a review of the IGL literature and case study research[4] the TOY vision is elaborated into **five goals of IGL practice** involving young children and older people:

Goal 1   Building and sustaining relationships

Goal 2   Enhancing social cohesion in the community

Goal 3   Facilitating older people as guardians of knowledge

Goal 4   Recognising the roles of (social) grandparents in young children's lives

Goal 5   Enriching the learning processes of both children and older adults

1.3   Why is professional development in IGL needed and how did TOY respond?

Working intergenerationally requires specific skills and competences. It also requires planning and collaboration amongst different sectors, which could include social care, ECEC, primary education, community

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[4] TOY Project Consortium, ibid.

development and local authorities. However, IGL as a specific area of professional work is only beginning to be recognised by policy makers, research and training organisations.

In 2016, a group of TOY partners took up the challenge to create training opportunities and share knowledge about intergenerational learning principles and practice. Thus, the **TOY-PLUS project** (2016 – 2018) was initiated. PLUS standing for **P**ractitioners **L**earning and **U**pscaling **S**kills in IGL.

The goal of TOY-PLUS was to promote awareness and expertise among practitioners to support young children and older adults, building inclusive communities for all ages. It is hoped that this would lead to sustainable and quality intergenerational learning programming and policies.

To reach this goal a group of researchers, trainers, NGO staff, ECEC and Social Care practitioners from the seven countries (Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the UK)[5] researched and developed two mutually supportive and related products:

Firstly, a **Together Old and Young online course (the TOY Course)**, and this accompanying **Handbook**.

Secondly, **an intergenerational quality assessment tool** (**TOY for Quality**) with agreed dimensions of quality intended for practitioners and organisations engaged in any stage of planning or implementation of Intergenerational Learning initiatives.

The TOY Course is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) which can also be delivered as a Blended Learning process, combining the online course with face-to-face sessions between tutors and learners.

1.4   Overview of the Handbook

This Handbook describes how the TOY Course was developed, its underpinning principles, the course structure and features, and a summary of the course content. The most important references and source material for the Handbook are included in footnotes. A glossary of key terms and concepts and additional information about the steps needed to develop a MOOC are to be found in the Appendices.

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[5] The TOY-PLUS project was a Strategic Partnership funded under the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

1.5   Who is this Handbook for?

The Handbook is intended for three user groups:

Firstly, it is a **resource for tutors** in Adult Education, or in colleges of Further or Higher Education[6] **who are supporting groups of learners[7] following the TOY Course**. Potential learners could be:

- • ECEC practitioners

- • Primary school teachers (working with 4 to 8 year-olds)

- • Social care practitioners working with older adults

- • Community development workers i.e. practitioners and volunteers working in community groups such as those linked to community social and cultural centres; sports clubs, scouting or religious institutions

- • Practitioners and volunteers working in libraries and museums

- • Educational specialists in non-formal learning

- • Those in leadership and/or advocacy positions in any of the above areas.

Secondly, the Handbook is also useful for **tutors and course developers** who are already engaged in pre-service and continuing professional development in ECEC, social care practice and primary education, or adult education and who **wish to include IGL in their pre-service training, or who wish to develop a continuing professional development (CPD) course focusing on IGL**.

Thirdly, the Handbook may also be of interest to any individual, team or organisation wishing to **develop a course which combines face-to-face workshops with online learning** for other areas of social and educational practice.

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[6] Throughout the Handbook we are using the term 'tutor' to refer to whoever is responsible for mentoring and supporting the learners. The term 'tutor' may be replaced by 'instructor', 'teacher' 'trainer' or 'lecturer' depending on your context.

[7] Throughout the Handbook we are using the term 'learner' to refer to whoever is participating in the TOY Course. The term 'learner' may be replaced by 'student' or 'trainee' depending on your context.

The **TOY approach**
to blended learning

2.1   What is blended learning?

Blended learning is a teaching approach **that combines online and in-person learning**, offering learners the best of both learning worlds. It is one of the main global trends shaping adult and higher education[8].

Online or e-learning makes use of a range of digital or communication technologies such as email, live chats, videos, quizzes and webinars. In-person learning takes place in a real classroom where learners and tutors have face-to-face interaction.

Combined, in a blended approach the two methods compliment each other. Important to note however, digital technologies do not by themselves enhance the quality of learning and teaching – pedagogy must always precede technology. However, by using a wide range of learning and teaching strategies and materials, the quality and diversity of a curriculum can be improved.

2.2   What might learner and tutor engagement look like in blended learning?

Through the use of digital technologies such as online chats, video lectures, interviews and quizzes learners can personalise their course experience according to their own strengths. They can also learn at their own pace by reading and doing reflection tasks at a time of the day and week that suits their other commitments. These two features improve the effectiveness of learning.

By monitoring learner engagement with the course materials and their interaction with other students and retention of concepts over time, tutors are able to monitor learner's progress and achievement of the learning outcomes.

Because much of the content can be delivered online with learners working at their own pace (replacing the more traditional method of the tutor as transmitter of knowledge) tutors are freed up and have more time to mentor learners. The mentoring role includes monitoring the learner's progress and adjusting the curriculum to the learner's needs, as well as supporting the development of higher order learning through suggesting additional problem-solving or practice

[8] **https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/what-does-innovation-in-pedagogy-look-like_cca19081-en**

experience. Mentoring can also take place in face-to-face class activities. Other peer learners in the group also have a mentoring role by sharing experiences and jointly reflecting on common challenges. With the support of the tutor and peers, the learners will develop the skills of managing information, understanding and questioning, which will lead to critical thinking. In this way, the learner and tutor become partners in the learning process.

The first step in developing any course, online only or online combined with face-to-face workshops is to identify learning outcomes. Once these are decided upon, you can then begin to build the course modules and the units within the modules. See **Appendix 2** for a more detailed explanation of these steps.

2.3   How was the TOY Course developed?

Three teams were involved in the development of the TOY Course:

1. An academic team, made up of educators and tutors from International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI), Linking Generations Northern Ireland/Beth Johnson Foundation (LGNI/BJF) and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)

2. A digital learning team comprising digital education specialists from Hellenic Open University (HOU)

3. A media production team of videographers and producers/ editors from Hellenic Open University, with support from videographers from MaMedia, Amsterdam and Dublin Institute of Technology.

The research and development phase of the TOY Course included a structured consultation process with a diverse group of experts in pedagogy of IGL, training and professional development in all participating countries of TOY-PLUS. The consultation focussed on the profile of learners, the level of the course and the intended learning outcomes.

The course content and learner experience with the online course platform was then piloted and evaluated between April and June 2018 by 82 learners from Ireland, Italy, Northern Ireland, Spain, Slovenia who work in the early childhood care and education; social and health care services; community development; adult education and local government. These learners also participated in two

face-to-face workshops in their own country. Twenty-seven of these learners then participated in an international workshop that took place in Dublin in May 2018.

Lessons learnt from the pilot phase were taken into account in the final version of the course, which was first made publicly available in October 2018.

2.4   Principles of the TOY Course

The following **principles** characterise the **learning experience on the TOY Course**:

Creation of a (global) learning community	Participants are encouraged and supported to view themselves as pioneers and innovators in their sector. Peer learning is central and each learner is a valuable resource to the group of learners and tutors. This face-to-face and online communication forms the basis of a strong learning community.
Promotion of learning partnerships	A partnership approach to learning and teaching underpins the course with learners and tutors learning together. This partnership relation is mirrored in the TOY approach to IGL whereby young children and older people as co-creators of knowledge and curriculum is viewed as emergent.
Active learning	The TOY course is based on active learning: there is time for thinking, doing and reflecting on real settings, and real practice and problems. Developing opportunities for IGL involving young children and older adults is encouraged throughout the course.
Diversity and cultural context	Social inclusion and respect for diversity are important aims in IGL. The TOY course draws on examples from a wide range of cultural and social contexts and settings.
Creating change	The development of the TOY Course involves action research and is building capacity for innovation and change.

These principles are put into practice in the TOY Course, an added value of which are optional face-to-face workshops designed to build a community of learners.

2.5   Learning outcomes of the TOY Course

The development of the TOY course is based on research findings of the TOY Project and other IGL projects with respect to skills and competences associated with IGL. The formulation of the learning outcomes have been informed by Blooms Taxonomy of Learning (Revised)[9] and include both cognitive and affective domains.

The basic level of the course is European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 5. Box 1 below summarises Level 5 learning outcomes in knowledge, skills and competence.

Box 1: Learning outcomes at EQF level 5[10]

Knowledge	Comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge
Skills	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems
Competence	Exercise management and supervision in context of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others

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[9] Anderson, L.W. & Krathwohl, D.R. (2001), A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing. Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
[10] CEDEFOP, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2014), Briefing Note: The hidden potential of level 5 qualifications.

Two approaches or options are possible for the delivery of the TOY Course:

- **Option 1**
  a blended learning approach combining the 4-module online MOOC with two face-to-face workshops

- **Option 2**
  the stand-alone 4 module online MOOC.

There is scope to develop higher level skills, such as the ability to develop vision and critical reflection on IGL practice, within the TOY Course. This is facilitated in both the face-to-face workshops, which are designed to support and deepen the learning taking place in the MOOC, as well as in the reflection questions, discussion forums and chat rooms, which are part of the online course (see Chapter 3).

On completion of the TOY Course learners will:

1. Know the importance and relevance of intergenerational learning in today's changing society

2. Value the contribution of intergenerational learning to building generationally and socially inclusive communities

3. Know what a quality intergenerational learning initiative looks like and be able to apply monitoring and evaluation approaches to assess quality in intergenerational learning activities

4. Develop a vision, goals and strategies for intergenerational learning in their setting and sector

5. Understand the importance of sustainability, the factors that hinder or support intergenerational learning work and how it can be embedded in policy and practice

The TOY Course:
structure and module content explained

3.1   Online Modules

The TOY course consists of **four weekly online modules**:

Module

1   **Young and old learning together**

Module

2   **Intergenerational learning for social inclusion**

Module

3   **How to organise an intergenerational learning programme**

Module

4   **Quality and sustainability in intergenerational learning**

Each module is subdivided into 4 units. Each unit begins with a short introduction and a list of key concepts and ideas which will be discussed in that unit (see).

A range of activities are included in the MOOC units such as: videos, interviews, short and longer readings, illustrated PowerPoint lectures with voice over, and reflection questions to meet the needs of learners with a diverse range of learning styles. Each module ends with a summary infographic.

The expected study effort per weekly module is **6 hours**.

Engagement with fellow learners and tutors in the MOOC is facilitated via the **discussion forums** and **chat rooms** – one of each per module. In the discussion forum learners can introduce themselves and share their views and experiences of IGL in general. The chat rooms are designed so that learners can engage in a longer discussion with other learners and with the Course tutors, on a particular issue or challenge introduced in that module.

3.2   Face-to-face workshops

Experience from the piloting of the Course shows that supplementing the online modules with face-to-face workshops enriches the participants' learning and their experience of being part of a community of practice about IGL. In fact, a key recommendation from those involved in the piloting of the TOY Course is to incorporate **two half-day (3 hours) face-to-face workshops** for learners in the same country: at the beginning (Week 1, Module 1) and midway through the course (Week 3, Module 3), if possible.

The face-to-face workshops:

- Facilitate peer learning, whereby learners can share experiences and challenges in IGL and view each other and the wider international group of learners participating in the Course as a resource

- Support and deepen the learning taking place in the MOOC, including exploring more complex issues such as safeguarding children's and adult's well-being in IGL

- Provide an opportunity for learners to evaluate their learning and plans for IGL initiatives with support from peer learners and tutors.

A suggested outline programme for the workshops is to be found in Table 1 - below. Other topics can be added if needed, depending on the interests and prior experience of the learners in IGL.

Table 1: Suggested workshop content

Outline

Workshop 1

- Getting to know each other – and prior experience of IGL
- Personal and/or organisational aspirations in relation to IGL
- Introduction to TOY Vision and Goals and Principles of Course
- Exploring the TOY Course Learning Platform together

Workshop 2

- Recap on experiences so far in the course – sharing new insights in IGL
- Self-assessment of learners skills and competences in IGL – identifying areas for further development
- Safeguarding children and older adults
- Making a plan for a new IGL initiative

3.3 How learners are assessed in the TOY Course

Assessment in this course consists of self-assessment in the form of **end-of-module quizzes**, which are based on the content of the Module.

Learners are given three attempts to successfully complete the quiz. An 80% success rate on the quizzes is required to pass.

On successful completion of the course and with an upgraded registration (cost €50.00) learners can request a **Certificate of Achievement**.

Another benefit of the Upgrade is: **unlimited access** to this course including all videos, articles, self-assessment activities, discussion forums, quizzes and games.

3.4 TOY Course modules: Summary

Table 2 presents the TOY Course modules, associated learning outcomes and Units. A complete course syllabus is available to download from the **TOY Course page**.

Table 2: TOY Course Modules, Learning Outcomes and Units

Module 1
Young and old learning together

Learning outcomes

- Be familiar with the course structure and the interactive course environment

- Understand the concept of intergenerational learning

- Understand how children and older adults learn

- Be able to outline the benefits of bringing different generations together

Unit 1
Introduction to the Course

Unit 2
Introduction to intergenerational learning

Unit 3
New ideas about how young children and older people learn

Unit 4
Summary and quiz

Module 2
Intergenerational learning for social inclusion

Learning outcomes

- Realise how intergenerational learning can be applied within a wide range of contexts and settings

- Understand concepts of marginalisation and stereotyping in relation to young children and older people

- Understand the contribution of intergenerational learning to social inclusion

- Understand the links between intergenerational learning and community development

Unit 1
Intergenerational learning in different social and cultural contexts

Unit 2
Challenging stereotypes and promoting social inclusion

Unit 3
Intergenerational learning for community development

Unit 4
Summary and quiz

Module

3

How to organise an intergenerational learning programme

Learning outcomes

- Plan and take steps towards implementing an intergenerational learning activity involving young children and older people

- Be familiar with some tools and techniques used to facilitate meaningful intergenerational relationships

- Identify conditions for successful implementation of intergenerational learning work and possible challenges

- Identify skills and competences for intergenerational learning work

Unit 1
Planning and organising a successful intergenerational learning programme

Unit 2
Skills and competences for intergenerational learning work with young children and older adults

Unit 3
Developing an individual plan for intergenerational learning in your service or community

Unit 4
Summary and quiz

Module

4

Quality and sustainability in intergenerational learning

Learning outcomes

- Understand what a quality intergenerational learning initiative looks like

- Be able to apply monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the quality of intergenerational learning work

- Identify factors that help or hinder sustainability in intergenerational learning

- Understand how to embed intergenerational learning work in policy and other existing initiatives

Unit 1
The TOY approach to quality and evaluation of intergenerational learning

Unit 2
Sustainability of intergenerational learning

Unit 3
Putting it all together

Unit 4
Summary and quiz

Concluding comments:
the perspectives of TOY Course
developers and learners

For this final Chapter of the Handbook we provide a more personal reflection on the process of creating a blended learning course about intergenerational learning (IGL).

The task which we set for ourselves was to develop a course, which would be **user-friendly, inspirational and meaningful for practitioners** wishing to connect young children and older adults in Europe and beyond. Our wish was that they could **learn more about the theory and practice of IGL** and be part of an **international community of practice**.

The assignment brought together two groups of individuals: in one group those who had plenty of experience of IGL involving children and older adults from a research and/or practice perspective, but had little or no experience of online learning; and in the other group, those who were digital learning experts, but who had little or no experience of early childhood care and education (ECEC), care of older adults or the practice of IGL.

Added to this mix was the perennial 'European project' – the need to find common values and ways of doing, whilst also recognising and respecting differences in ways of thinking, being and expressing oneself.

The development of the **cross-national and interdisciplinary TOY Course** was **more complex** but ultimately **more rewarding** than any of us had envisaged when we first embarked on the task in November 2016. We were very fortunate in being supported by a number of key international experts who provided important feedback at critical junctures along the way both about IGL and adults learning online.

We were also indebted to the 82 learners in five countries who participated in the piloting of the TOY Course between April and June 2018. Their enthusiasm and suggestions helped us to both improve the Course and reassured us that the development of the TOY Course was indeed an important and valued endeavour.

To conclude this Handbook, we share with you some of their insights and reflections – below. We hope that you too will be inspired to feature IGL in your courses and continuing professional development plans, so that many more people of all ages will benefit from learning intergenerationally.

*"I have really enjoyed doing this programme.
The content was delivered in a very informative and interesting way and had a lovely mix of theory and what is happening in practice."*

*"The TOY course was very informative, easy to follow and knowledgeable.
I am now inspired to follow through on my own learning initiative and to take it one step at a time."*

*"This course was very interesting and gave me new ideas, more in-depth studies on planning and designing intergenerational projects.
It helped to read the cases, the experiences, the doubts of others – that I will treasure."*

"The TOY course helped me to feel the 'good-net' working around me that makes big changes possible in our communities."

"I enjoyed the two workshops listening to peoples' experience of IGL... Having a diverse range of professionals in one room was extremely beneficial as you gained valuable tips... Regardless of age everyone has a voice, a skill and can contribute to IGL, everyone, even if they think they can't. Everyone wants to feel alive, to be respected and to be loved".

If you would like more information about the development of the TOY Course, please contact us at **info@toyproject.net**.

If you would like to register for the TOY Course, please visit the **TOY Course webpage**.

Appendices

Appendix 1   Glossary of terms

Blended learning

Blended learning is a teaching approach that combines online and in-person learning.

Care setting for older people

A care setting for older people can be a residential facility or a day centre. Residential care facilities (also known as Homes for Older People) are long-term care facilities which provide supervision and assistance in activities of daily living with medical and nursing services when required. Senior citizens centres (also known as Adult day centres) are settings offering social, cultural and learning activities on a daily basis.

Childcare setting

A childcare setting is an organised service which offers a variety of types of group care, development and learning opportunities to young children in the years before they attend primary school. Across Europe there are a range of terms used to describe such settings e.g. crèche, kindergarten, nursery, preschool, playgroup or children's centre. Sometimes the umbrella term early childhood education and care (ECEC) is used to describe such settings.

Community for all ages

A community for all ages is one designed to be more welcoming to residents of all ages.

ECEC

ECEC refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age - regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content - and includes centre and family day-care; privately and publicly funded provision; pre-school and pre-primary provision.[11]

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[11]Source: European Commission (2014), Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Formal learning (settings)

Formal learning is learning that takes place within the institutionalised and chronically graded education system and includes settings such as pre-primary and primary schools, secondary schools and third level educational institutions.

Informal learning (settings)

The lifelong process by which everyone acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experience and encounters in social and physical environments at home, at work, at play and in the community.

Non-formal learning (settings)

Non-formal learning is any organised, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the formal education system. Examples of non-formal learning settings include: parent and toddler groups, libraries, older people's clubs and youth clubs.

Intergenerational learning (IGL)

Intergenerational learning involves different age groups learning together, learning from each other and learning about each other in a range of settings. Intergenerational learning is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.

Intergenerational practice (IP)

Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities.

Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning refers to learning and training which can occur across the lifespan. The term is also used to reflect the view that everyone should have the opportunity to engage in learning at any time during their life.

Lifewide learning

Lifewide learning highlights that learning can take place across the full range of life experiences at any stage in life. It covers a multitude of levels, means and activities. It includes formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Mediators (of IGL practice)

In the context of the TOY approach mediators of IGL practice are typically ECEC practitioners, social care practitioners, teachers, community workers, senior volunteers and parents. Their role includes supporting interaction and being a bridge and interpreter between generations.

MOOC

MOOC stands for massive open online course. A MOOC is an online course aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web.

Social cohesion

The OECD Development Centre describes a cohesive society as one which "works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility".[12]

Volunteer

A volunteer is someone who has a specific role and responsibility within an initiative or an activity. The role is undertaken out of interest and there is no remuneration involved.

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[12]OECD (2011), Perspectives on Global Development 2012: Social Cohesion in a Shifting World, OECD Publishing, Paris, **https://doi.org/10.1787/persp_glob_dev-2012-en**

Appendix 2   A step by step guide to developing a MOOC

Describing learning outcomes

The first step in any course design is to establish what learners will have learnt when they have finished the course. In other words the *learning outcomes*. Note learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and competences that will be acquired by the learner, not what the tutor will teach.

Learning outcomes should be grounded in literature studies, research and experience in the relevant field of study.

It is important that the number of outcomes is proportional to the duration of the course.

Building course modules

Once the learning outcomes have been written, it is time to build the course. A key decision is to decide on the timing and number of face-to-face in class sessions or workshops in relation to the online components (MOOC).

MOOCs are usually based on a **weekly structure**, and the amount of content in the weeks needs to be manageable, relative to the expectations of an open online course. Each module should have a **theme**. It is recommended to focus on three or four sub topics per week, based on the module's theme. Each topic is dealt with in a section or unit. Therefore, each module contains a few units. Learning outcomes have to be distributed over all the modules. Usually, the outcomes become more complex (or advanced) as the learner progresses towards the final modules in the MOOC.

Each module usually ends with a section containing **selected additional reading and resources** for (optional) further study. This section contains briefly annotated recommended reading, books, articles, videos and websites. The volume of its contents do not have to follow the estimated study time per week (see below).

What does a unit look like?

Every unit should begin with a short and inviting introduction to the contents. It can consist of a short statement (3-4 lines) that explains the aims and objectives of the unit. Then the learner should find a list of **key concepts and ideas** for that unit. The key concepts are not glossary or dictionary definitions; rather they point out the essential terms and ideas referred to in that unit.

Note that all these key concepts must be explained in the body of the unit (i.e. using a relevant textual source, in the context of an interview, etc.).

The **core training activities** contained in a MOOC can be of various types. However, the overall study effort should not exceed 10 hours per week. Many MOOCs are designed for a shorter time investment e.g. 4 to 6 hours per week.

Examples of MOOC activities are:

- **Study material**, preferably online, in the form of documents, articles, presentations etc.

- **Video based material**, such as interviews, lectures, discussions, video clips of practice, etc.

- **Activities or case studies** on project websites showcasing ongoing research, which can be valuable for learners

- **Assignments** for the learners to complete online or offline and submit a response by a set date

- **Discussions and guided reflections** involving the learners on a specific topic; the tutor may intervene to re-direct or summarise

- **Quizzes**, tests, reflective questions, **peer review tasks**, which are mainly used for self-assessment and exchanging knowledge and experiences with fellow trainees

Note that many of the activities may lead to different 'correct answers', hence explanations and feedback from the tutors or fellow learners in the form of comments are usually provided.

Videos are an essential component of the MOOC. They are the heart of the course therefore it is worth devoting the time to ensure that they are done well. They can be overviews, discussions, interviews or something different. When used correctly, video can serve as a powerful teaching tool that supports critical components of learning, like:

- Developing critical thinking skills

- Applying knowledge

- Fostering deep understanding

In order to maximize learner's engagement, the videos should be short - ideally 3 to 5 minutes and never more than 15 minutes. It is possible to break down longer videos into smaller segments separated by assessment questions.

It is better to use the "talking head" style and interviews with text overlaid onto the video in order to summarise main points or highlight keywords and phrases. A textual transcript of all spoken dialogues in a video should be provided. The combination of visuals, spoken word, text, joint reflection supports the individual learning styles.

More information on MOOC design can be found **here**.

The TOY-PLUS Consortium

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