ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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Methodologies for e-learning: a guide to design and develop projects

The guide covers methodologies and suggestions for creating interactive content and facilitating online learning, as well as some of the technologies used to create and deliver e-learning training.

For those approaching eLearning training for the first time and want to deepen their knowledge of e-learning characteristics and teaching design methods and techniques using this training method, we recommend a resource that is not particularly recent (it is in fact a publication of the 2011 FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), but certainly very complete in content and very clear in the exhibition.

The document is updated to 2021 and **can be downloaded directly from the FAO institutional website**.

Major changes from the previous version include new examples and case studies in all the chapters; new topics such as mobile learning and microlearning, digital badges, MOOCs and webinars; expansion of topics like blended learning, online facilitation, instructional techniques for e-learning content; and substantial revision of introductory and technology chapters.

This is the 138 page volume (in pdf format, 14.4 Mb) entitled "E-learning methodologies. A guide for the design and development of e-learning courses" whose purpose is to provide a detailed design guide and the development of an e-learning course for educational trainers and designers who do not know e-learning design.

The guide also provides concepts and basic information on the processes and resources involved in the development of e-learning, which could be of interest to those responsible for personnel development. The information contained in the guide is based on consolidated models of teaching design and learning theories and incorporates FAO's experience in providing e-learning courses in development contexts. While there are several definitions of e-learning that reflect different perspectives.

In this document, e-learning is defined as the use of information technology and the Internet to provide a wide range of solutions to enable learning and improve performance.

The guide focuses on formal learning, particularly on structured courses designed to meet job-related training objectives, and does not address the needs assessment stages of a training project, but rather the design, development and delivery of eLearning training specifications. Given the year of publication, the focus of the guide is centered on e-learning solutions suitable for development contexts characterized by technological constraints, such as limited hardware capabilities and low bandwidth Internet connections.

Although much of what is covered in this guide can be applied to e-learning in primary and secondary education, these guidelines have been developed mainly for adult students, i.e. students who have completed their formal education , but who are still motivated to improve their job duties and knowledge. Adult students share some characteristics different from those of full-time students, which influence the design of learning programs. In particular, adult students:

- they need to know the benefits of learning (because they have to learn something);
- prefer to learn experientially;
- have an approach to learning as problem solving;
- they learn best where they can see the immediate value and application of content;
- prefer to study at a time, place and pace at ease.

The guide is divided into four main sections:

Part I: Introduction

Part I (chapters 1 and 2) introduces the features, benefits, activities and e-learning resources needed to develop an e-learning project. It is aimed primarily at those responsible for training and capacity building and for those interested in starting an e-learning project or integrating e-learning components into their organization's training programs.

Part II: Design of an e-learning course

Part II (chapters 3 and 4) provides guidance on how to design an e-learning course (from needs, analysis of objectives and tasks / topics to the definition of learning objectives, sequencing, choice of learning strategies and delivery formats). This part is aimed primarily at educational trainers and designers who aim to create learning projects that truly meet the needs of students. So not only well-defined formal courses, but also other forms of learning, such as learning at home or learning at work, for example through e-mentoring and e-coaching.

Part III: creation of interactive content

Part III (chapters 5, 6 and 7) provides detailed guidance on creating interactive content (from the application of learning and media strategies to course development). This part is addressed to educational designers and subject matter experts involved in content development, as well as to all those who wish to learn more about the methodology and tools used to create e-learning content.

Part IV: management and evaluation of learning activities

Part IV (chapters 8 and 9) provides an overview of online collaborative learning, assessment methods and learning platforms used to host online courses. This is aimed at training managers, facilitators and educational designers who want to know how to conduct and evaluate an online course and how learning platforms can support course delivery and communication between participants.

The guide also includes a glossary, a bibliography and a series of models and tables.

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