ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 8 - number 309 Wednesday 30 october 2024

New digital skills required for trainers

Digital skills for trainers and international standards for their development guide the quality of eLearning courses.

Digital technologies have expanded access to education and made learning more flexible and personalized. In this context, **trainers** face the challenge of continuously adapting their skills to effectively manage online training courses.

Digital skills thus become essential for trainers who wish to not only survive but thrive in this rapidly changing environment. These skills range from instructional design to the use of learning management platforms (LMS); from integrating interactive multimedia tools to online student assessment. Trainers must be able to create engaging and accessible content, manage digital communication, and effectively monitor learners' progress.

Subjects involved in training course delivery

In the eLearning world, the production of training courses requires the collaboration of various **professionals**, each contributing specific skills essential to ensure course quality and effectiveness. Here's an overview of the skills required for the main subjects involved.

Subject Matter Expert (SME)

Subject Matter Experts are specialists in their field of knowledge and are tasked with providing accurate and up-to-date content for courses. Required skills include deep specialized knowledge, the ability to **synthesize** and **structure complex information** in an understandable way, and collaboration with instructional designers to transform this knowledge into effective learning modules. SMEs must also adapt to the technologies used for eLearning, providing input on how their content can be best visualized or made interactive through digital platforms.

Instructional Designer

Instructional Designers are responsible for designing the learning experience, ensuring that the course is pedagogically sound and engaging. This includes the ability to apply learning theories and **instructional design principles**, such as **gamification** and **microlearning**, to increase engagement and learning effectiveness. They must be experts in using eLearning technologies and authoring tools and possess strong project management skills to coordinate different aspects of course production.

Also read " **SME vs Instructional designer: the roles of eLearning**".

Online trainers and teachers

Online trainers must be able to not only master the content they teach but also effectively use eLearning platforms to facilitate and monitor student learning. This includes skills in managing discussion forums, conducting webinars, and using **online assessment tools**. It's also essential that they possess excellent **communication skills** to interact effectively with students even at a distance. Furthermore, they must be able to quickly adapt to technological innovations and platform updates to make the best use of the tools at their disposal.

Together, these professional figures form a team that ensures the quality and effectiveness of eLearning training courses, leveraging their unique skills to create educational experiences that are both informative and engaging.

Digicompedu and criteria for digital skills development

The **DigiCompEdu framework**, developed by the European Commission, is designed to improve and assess educators' digital competencies. This framework represents a structured guide useful for effectively integrating digital technologies into the educational process.

DigiCompEdu is articulated in six main areas covering different aspects of digital education:

1. **Professional Engagement**: communication and collaboration through digital tools;
2. **Digital Resources**: selection, creation, and management of digital content;
3. **Teaching**: use of technologies to support teaching;
4. **Assessment**: evaluating student learning through digital tools;
5. **Learner Empowerment**: use of technologies for student autonomy and inclusion;
6. **Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence**: to develop responsible and creative digital competence.

For each of these areas, DigiCompEdu defines specific competencies that educators should develop, thus enriching their professional practice.

For professional engagement, teachers are required to be able to **communicate effectively through digital channels** and collaborate with colleagues and other stakeholders. This requires continuous updating on new technologies and teaching methodologies.

Knowing how to select and integrate **digital resources** into the curriculum is another essential competency, as is the ability to organize a digital learning environment. Regarding **assessment and empowerment**, teachers are required to **know how to use digital tools** to assess students and interpret collected data. It should be emphasized that the digital skills developed by teachers are aimed at their transfer to students.

The DigiCompEdu framework establishes **proficiency levels** that help trainers identify their current level of competence and plan their professional development path. These levels range from A1, indicating a beginner, to C2, identifying a pioneer capable of innovating and guiding the use of technology in education.

The implementation of DigiCompEdu in educator training programs not only increases the effectiveness of digital teaching but also helps standardize the approach to digital education through clear and shared criteria. This ensures that all educators can provide consistent, high-quality education appropriate to the demands of the contemporary educational context.

Standards and criteria for digital skills development

In addition to the European framework, there are various standards to guide training quality. These provide clear criteria for the design, implementation, and evaluation of online courses. Below is a list of the main training standards employed:

- ISTE Standards
- Quality Matters Standards
- ISO/IEC 40180
- ESG Guidelines (European Standards and Guidelines)

The **ISTE Standards** are criteria developed by the International Society for Technology in Education to integrate digital technologies in education. ISTE Standards are essential for trainers who aim to incorporate innovative and responsible teaching practices into their curriculum.

They are designed to integrate innovative technologies and teaching methods into education and are aimed at students, educators, administrators, and trainers, offering **guidance on how to use technology to enhance learning**. The standards for educators, for example, require promoting innovation, designing technology-rich learning environments, and developing professional digital competencies. The goal is to improve students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, preparing them for a future in the digital world.

The **Quality Matters Standards** focus on quality assurance in online and hybrid learning. This set of norms and principles is designed to **assist institutions and trainers in creating online courses** that meet high educational quality and accessibility criteria.

The QMS are based on eight fundamental principles including: course design, student interactions, student support, technological resources, and assessments. Each course reviewed according to QMS standards must pass a rigorous evaluation based on specific quality criteria. The goal is precisely to ensure that online courses offer high-quality learning experiences, are accessible, and promote student success.

The **ISO/IEC 40180** standard establishes a framework for the quality of ICT-based learning, education, and training. It provides a methodology for describing, evaluating, and improving the quality of educational processes, ensuring that eLearning courses meet international excellence criteria and are continuously updated according to technological and educational developments.

The ISO standard proposes a structured **quality model** in various processes, including course design, delivery, support, and evaluation. Institutions can use this standard to develop, monitor, and improve their educational programs, ensuring they meet international quality criteria. The goal is to provide consistent, quality education, continuously improving processes through feedback and revisions.

The **European Standards and Guidelines** establish criteria for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area and emphasize institutions' responsibility in maintaining high standards. These guidelines help trainers and educational institutions develop, monitor, and improve the quality of eLearning courses, ensuring that the education offered meets European expectations and promotes academic and professional excellence.

In conclusion, the objective of the ESG is to promote educational systems that are systematically monitored and continuously improved, thus ensuring a high level of education throughout Europe. The **Guidelines** are therefore formulated with the aim of maintaining and improving quality and transparency in education.