



Enhance Digital Teaching Platform

Promising Practice

Implemented by: Education and Training Foundation (ETF)

Where: United Kingdom

Status: Started in 2019

Summary: The Enhance Digital Teaching Platform is an online platform that supports innovation and use of technology in teaching and training by offering free, bite-sized, certified, online self-learning modules mapped to the Digital Teaching Professional Framework, the UK's National EdTech Competency Framework.

Overview

Developing teacher training and practice through technology

The Enhance Digital Teaching Platform is designed to help develop teaching and training practice through use of technology. The platform supports innovation in teaching and training to improve student outcomes and equip learners with the skills needed for the changing world of work, where technology use is becoming increasingly important. ETF receives its funding from the UK Department for Education (DfE).

Fully-subsidized training offers

The Enhance Digital Teaching Platform currently hosts two fully-subsidized training offers to support teachers and trainers in using educational technology (EdTech) and developing their digital skills:

1. The EdTech in Teaching and Training Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme is designed to help teachers and trainers develop and refine their practice using technology and consists of 175 microlearning modules of 5 minutes each. It is underpinned by the Digital Teaching Professional Framework (DTPF), ETF's national competency framework for helping practitioners to define and assess their progress in using EdTech to support effective learning. The DTPF is linked to the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu).
2. The Essential Digital Skills (EDS) programme aims to support staff who already are or who will be delivering qualifications relating to the UK's new legal digital entitlement – the Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs) and the Digital Functional Skills Qualifications (DFSQs). The EDS CPD programme consists of 20 training modules of 20 minutes each.

Key features of the initiative include:

- Free, certified, online self-learning training modules
- A user-centred, mobile-first design accessible anywhere and anytime on any device
- An achievements badge system to reward participation in and application of training
- Facilities to build a community of practice by awarding special badges to teachers/trainers who comment on at least 10 different practices or who review at least 10 different shared reflections
- Management dashboard enabling TVET institutions to utilize the modules to support staff development

Meeting the urgent need for digital skills training

The Enhance platform stemmed from the ETF's realization that training for teachers on EdTech and digital skills was needed. The findings of ETF's National Training Needs Analysis, carried out in 2017, had shown that 59% of training providers urgently needed training on how to use digital and other new technologies for teaching and learning (Education and Training Foundation, 2018)¹. Thus, in January 2018, ETF hired a project manager to lead on EdTech and digital skills.

Objectives

The Enhance Digital Teaching Platform is designed to help develop teaching and training practice using technology. It targets teachers, trainers and assessors within the Further Education and Training sector in England.

Removing barriers to the use of technology in teaching and training

The initiative was implemented in response to the findings of the National Training Needs Analysis, carried out in 2017. A positioning review undertaken by ETF in 2018 to understand the barriers to and the enabling factors for the use of technology in teaching and training likewise informed the design of the Enhance platform.

Several features make Enhance an innovative platform:

- Its EdTech CPD programme is mapped to the DTPF, which is in turn linked to DigCompEdu, allowing training to be certified, widely recognized and portable.
- The platform's design overcomes some of the key barriers to teachers'/trainers' participation in digital skills training and application of training received. For example:
 - Time was found to be a major barrier to teachers'/trainers' uptake of professional development opportunities, so the ETF adopted micro-learning (5-minute) modules.
 - Technophobia was another barrier, so the ETF approaches the training from a pedagogical angle that teachers understand.
 - To motivate teachers/trainers to participate in professional development, ETF built gamification into the platform.

¹ Education and Training Foundation. 2018. Training Needs in the Further Education Sector. London, Educational and Training Foundation.

DESIGNED TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT



- Signing-on was viewed as intimidating by many teachers/trainers, so no sign-on is required to use the platform.
- To earn 2-star or 3-star digital badges, platform users must submit reflections on the impacts of their practices on student learning, which has allowed for the emergence of a good practice database to inspire others.
- The peer-review process linked to the digital badge system has fostered the development of practitioner-led communities of practice.

Outcomes and impact

- Teachers'/trainers' improved digital and pedagogical skills and propensities to apply these skills in their teaching and training practices
- Continuous skills upgrading by teachers/trainers owing to the platform's gamification features and digital badge system
- Development of strong communities of practice and a database highlighting effective practices in technology-assisted teaching and training

Self-paced learning

ETF has developed 175 microlearning modules of 5 minutes each for the EdTech CPD programme, 20 training modules of 20 minutes each for the Essential Digital Skills CPD programme, and a national competency framework (the DTPF) linked to the DigCompEdu for helping practitioners to define and assess their progress in using EdTech to support effective learning.

Widespread use of the platform

The enhanced digital teaching platform

+ 14,900 registered users

+ 330,000 learning sessions

+ 29,000 EdTech-EDS badges

Registrations on the platform in April 2022 were about to hit the 15,000 milestone, with registered users able to track their learning, gain digital badges and benefit from additional facilities, such as self-assessment tools and communities of practice. More than 29,000 digital badges have been awarded since the platform was launched in January 2019.

Recognized as one of the best EdTech products in the United Kingdom.

The Enhance Digital Teaching Platform has been recognized as one of the best EdTech products in the UK for two years in a row (in 2020 and 2021) in the EdTech 50 awards.

Challenges

Culture and mindset

Issues such as teacher/trainer technophobia, lack of confidence, lack of ability, and lack of a common understanding of what good practice in EdTech looks like were major challenges. Likewise, there was initial resistance to the concept of microlearning, with some educators doubting that you can learn anything useful in the space of 5 minutes. However, ETF's main objective was to shift mindsets and to plant the seeds of what is possible with technology, and what is possible in 5 minutes.

Funding and content development with tight deadlines

Use of technology is a fast-changing landscape, and content will need to be regularly updated to remain valuable. Enhance was designed to be an evolving learning ecosystem.

COVID-19 pandemic

During lockdowns, ETF needed to support educators to deliver remotely. ETF took steps to manage that crisis by setting up online webinars and developing a new category of microlearning modules – the Connected and Effective modules – dedicated to supporting educators in delivering in learning remotely.

“It is critical to adopt a user-centred design process, to make sure that what you are developing is fit for purpose and meets the needs and expectations of your target audience. Of course, it is important also to understand the learners’ journey and to make sure that what it is that you are developing is fully inclusive and accessible. You must take into account cost constraints and sustainability as well.”

Learn more

Vikki Liogier, National Head of EdTech and Digital Skills, Education and Training Foundation (ETF), helped to compile this document.

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To learn more about the ETF, visit: <https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/>

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Insights

- It is critical to adopt a user-centred design process – to make sure that what you are developing is fit for purpose and meets the needs and expectations of your target audience.
- It is also important to understand learners’ journey – and to make sure that what you are developing is fully inclusive and accessible.
- Cost constraints and sustainability must be taken into account.

Next steps

The Department for Education (DfE) has reviewed the support it provides around basic skills and EdTech, and has decided not to supply grant funding for the 2022-23 year to support the work that ETF provides on its behalf in this area. However, both the DfE and ETF remain committed to supporting the professional development of Further Education and Training colleagues, and recognize that digital capabilities are critical to the UK economy and performance. ETF is currently exploring alternative funding opportunities to extend its support to educators on EdTech, Essential Digital Skills and Vocational Digital Skills.

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