

DIG-IT: Digital Education Initiatives and Timely Solutions

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1 Summary of the Project

In light of the Covid-19 crisis, which led to a substantial increase in the usage of digital learning environments, affecting many learners [2], DIG-IT is an ongoing project¹ aiming to support educational technologies. A contradiction inspired the project: even though we are living in an era of rapid technological changes able to generate new approaches to education bearing benefits [1], at the same time, academic staff still resist taking advantage of available technologies in their teaching. However, some EU universities offer robust online education, while others lag, offering few to zero online learning opportunities. DIG-IT aims to address the imbalance and inequity of digital education opportunities offered at EU universities. A preliminary literature review and needs analysis identified that the cost and time required to design or learn how to design online study units and resources are significant barriers in implementing digital education. The project deals with the need for convenient, accessible, continuing education in academia with a case study in the healthcare sector, having thousands of busy practitioners needing continuous education (CE) while ensuring patient safety.

DIG-IT partners offer diverse skills and expertise ranging from online learning experts, computer science researchers, and healthcare professionals. The partners were chosen with the consideration of expertise or need for expertise concerning knowledge and skills required to design, deliver and evaluate digital education; need and interest to enhance initiatives and investment in the use of technology in teaching; and previous success in academic outputs. Furthermore, industry partners were included that could facilitate pioneering new avenues to extend education opportunities and CE practice.

1.1 Objectives

DIG-IT overall objectives are: (i) to collaboratively design evidence-based methods to assist academic staff with adopting digital education practices, increasing

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their knowledge and skills and the use of technology in teaching; and (ii) to create an inter-nations learning community of practice to collaboratively create, share and distribute innovative training and teaching resources to support academic staff by reducing time and cost required to design digital education products and processes.

1.2 Expected Tangible Result

The project has envisioned the following tangible results: 1. a digital education innovative *interactive framework* and companion evaluation toolkit as a quality standard in guiding the design, delivery and evaluation of effective online study units, supporting educational technologies; 2. *innovative and evidence-based methods* to assist university academic staff and health industry educators with adopting digital education practices into current curricula; 3. the two-phased delivery and evaluation of: (i) a *nine-module course* to support and motivate educators on how to design, deliver and evaluate digital education resources, and (ii) a *train-the-trainer* online course to develop digital education experts to support and promote digital education; 4. an *open access repository* and website providing access to free open digital education resources; 5. bilingual (English & Italian) digital healthcare education apps collaboratively designed and piloted in a hospital partner.

2 Summary of Current Project Results

At this point of the project, the team has delivered successfully the first round of the two envisioned courses: (i) the online course on how to design, deliver and evaluate digital study units; and (ii) the train-the-trainer online course. Additionally, the evaluation process of both courses was completed and the data were analysed. The results demonstrate positive outcomes and positive feedback. Moreover, the “*European Union Digital Education Quality Standard Framework and Companion Evaluation Toolkit*” aiming to guide the design, delivery and evaluation of effective online learning, was designed, and an interactive tool² was developed hosted in the DIG-IT web platform. In the same platform: (i) the “*ECG Interpretation for Nurses online course*” healthcare course was developed, and healthcare workers are currently piloting it gathering positive feedback; and (ii) an open-access resources repository was created and released to the public. The included resources will continue to be updated and enhanced throughout the project duration. All the above tools were developed using web technologies (HTML, CSS, Javascript, PHP).

References

1. Legon, R., Garrett, R.: Chloe 4: Navigating the mainstream. Quality Matters & Eduventures Survey of Chief Online Officers (2020)
2. McCarthy, N.: Covid-19’s staggering impact on global education. In: World Economic Forum (2020)

² <http://project-digit.eu/index.php/digital-education-quality-standards/>.