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My Media Trainer: An Innovative, Interactive Resource to Ensure Sustainability in the Training of Media Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Communication and media play a crucial role in both message delivery and the empowerment of people in their own development processes. UNESCO has been actively engaged in trying to build capacity among media professionals to equip them with training in sensitivity to issues, the different formats that they can use to disseminate information, and how best to get the information to the people who are most affected by it (Khan, 2008). One of the challenges of educating large numbers of professionals, particularly in developing countries, is a lack of trained teachers. To meet this challenge, UNESCO commissioned the development of an interactive training program that would innovatively use available technologies for introducing media professionals around the world to the basic knowledge and skills in curriculum development, pedagogical planning and implementation, and evaluation processes. A combination of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning can help to address the issue of access to education. The development of this training package and the pedagogical and instructional design decisions made to ensure equity and sustainability across trainer contexts in a flexible delivery format with a student-centred focus will be examined in this paper. It is hoped that this can assist others in the development of similar educational resources. The project aim was to ensure that media professionals have equitable access to knowledge and skills in effective training practices to develop as trainers and in turn to be effective in inducting new colleagues into the profession.

Highly positive evaluations of the CD-ROM from geographically diverse learning contexts are included to demonstrate how this training program succeeded in meeting its brief.

BACKGROUND

In the burgeoning and increasingly complex media environment of the 21st century, the professional media practitioner requires multi-skilled competencies as never before. It is now commonplace for news agency and print journalists to file their written stories for a newspaper, magazine or agency and, at the same time, submit video and audio coverage of the same event for on-line distribution. Such is

the dimension of the new journalism and the public's expectations of instant and unlimited access to news and information resources, many newspapers are now uploading their first editions for on-line consumption on the Internet before the traditional daily printing and distribution method. Just as print journalists write for many genres, radio reporters now pack a digital still camera and camcorder when on assignment, while television crews are expected to submit live video footage for both on-line and broadcast access, as well as for repackaging into subsequent alternative digital media formats.

Given the changing role of the media practitioner, the need for training, retraining, skills upgrading and human resource development is surging as knowledge industries begin to increasingly overtake 'rust belt' communities as the key drivers of economic and social advancement. For the first time, so-called developing and least developed countries are facing the possibility of harnessing technologies in such a way as to ensure that they are at the forefront of change and whole nations can cross the digital divide. However, in many countries, developmental progress is being thwarted by a lack of skilled training personnel available to undertake the task of providing the necessary practical and theoretical training to fellow colleagues. For example, in national media agencies, especially in Asia, trainers often evolve from within the ranks of existing professional practitioners. In other words, an experienced journalist might be asked to initiate and operate a short-term course for new reporters, or a competent video camera operator could be called upon to deliver a technical training course for an incoming cadre of potential camera crews. Often, the trainers themselves have little knowledge of modern training practices or the structure, methodology, implementation and evaluation of courses and programs for adult learners, and thus deliver courses based on their own school or university student learning experiences. In an increasingly complex training environment, professionalism is key to ensuring effective skills upgrading outcomes.

By way of seeking to partly address the training dearth, in September, 2006 the Communication and Information Sector of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approached the Centre for Communication and Social Change in the School of Journalism and Communication at The University of Queensland with a view to the development of "a manual for a training of trainers course (TOT) for media organizations. The deliverables may consist of a printed handbook with a highly interactive computer-based learning CD-ROM" (Padhy, 2006). However, UNESCO asked the Centre for "any alternative idea on this issue" (*ibid*) should some other format be seen as potentially more user-friendly and effective. The Centre proposed to UNESCO that a generic, CD-ROM based *Training of Trainers Teaching and Learning Resource Package* be developed to support the work of media training personnel, especially in emerging countries where new media is now affording greater participatory possibilities than in the past (Hadlow, 2006). The package would enable trainers to engage with new methodologies of adult learning, to develop new teaching skills and to advance their professionalism in both traditional media and new technological fields. As a result, a project team was developed comprising School academic staff, external consultants and a development team from the University's Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) Educational Resources Unit.

The team adopted the philosophical approach that a sustainable training package must take into account several considerations including the nature of the learner, pedagogical underpinnings and sound instructional design considerations that tied the theories and practices of learning and teaching to principles of learning with technology. In particular, the team was cognisant of the media training landscape in so-called developing and least developed countries where, often, professional broadcasters, print journalists or mid-level media managers have few, if any, academic qualifications, and have been unable to access formal training-of-trainer programs or to study adult learning techniques. Thus the team aimed to create a user-friendly training package while, at the same time, ensuring the transfer of learning experiences in a systematic, methodologically sound and attractive manner.

A key aim of this paper is to demonstrate that, given a particular brief, context, and philosophical base, development of technologically-managed professional training requires consideration of learner,

technology, and content to ensure appropriate and effective training. Thus we now turn to consider both the resource design and content development facets in the development of this resource, followed by positive information evaluation responses, confirming the soundness of the instructional and content design.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Instructional design brings theories and practices of learning and teaching to principles of learning with technology in creating learning resources that best suit an identified educational need within a specific defined context and learner group. On the one hand are the instructional design methodologies centred on the commonly accepted ADDIE model: analyse, design, develop, implement, evaluate (e.g. see discussion by Molander, 2003); however it is Bower's recently proposed "affordance analysis e-learning design methodology" (2008, p.8) that most accurately reflects and guides the instructional design intent in developing the *My Media Trainer* resource. The key notion underpinning the methodology is that educational goals lead to the consideration of tasks appropriate to the goals, but it is considering the characteristics of tasks with the characteristics, or affordances, of technological tools that leads to the most appropriate instructional design.

First, the team considered the learner group and their educational needs. As already discussed, the target group would be media professionals anywhere in the world, particularly developing nations. Thus, several key characteristics are evident: computer access was assumed but high quality access to technology, reliable access to Internet and greater bandwidth could not; the trainer will use the tutorial independent of any institution, instructor or other support network. From this, the design and development team determined a number of affordances for the resources which guided the design decisions (see table 1 below). The decision to develop a graphically enhanced html-coded CD-ROM resource allowed us to address the technical affordances (avoiding issues with access to Internet or bandwidth, ease and low cost of postage compared to print materials); media & synthesis affordances (could integrate text, interactive activities, videos, other resources, diagrams); useability (ease of noticing how the tutorial works and what to do – intuitiveness); and reliability (could likely be used on most computer facilities, with no reliance on special effects other than a non-crucial introductory video for each section). In addition, the team could address envisaged learner needs through temporal affordances (a CD-ROM can be used anytime, anywhere, by anyone); navigational affordances (learners can see the menu by sections, can move back through completed sections and pages although they must complete each page and section in a linear progression, can leave and return to their last position at any time); access-control affordances (users are limited to independent learning but the coding allows ease of updating information from a developer's perspective. User-learners can print each page if preferred or desired); and aesthetics (a clear, clean, calm image - each page is presented with effective and consistent use of headings, layout, white space, and graphic images to denote learner activity).

Figure 1: Affordances required and met through design decisions.

Need	Affordance (Bowen, 2008)	Design decision
Access to technology: low Internet, computer capabilities (variety in non-specific intended users)	Technical affordances; Spatial affordances Reliability	CD-ROM - easily transported, no issues with bandwidth and Internet access; more affordable to send than paper; variable screen sizes applicable through right hand margin and text display.
Experience of the entire learning sequence by busy professionals	Temporal affordances; Navigation affordances; Access-control affordances	Accessible on any computer by any person at any time; users can leave the program and return to where they were up

		to; each page is printable in black-and-white; users can move around already complete sections/pages.
Autonomous learning, no required support teacher or facility, stand-alone resource	Useability	Simple layout and design; consistent presentation and layout; menu visible, consistent graphic images.
Interesting, motivational, learning success	Media affordances; Synthesis affordances; Aesthetics	Combines/integrates text, interactive exercises, short video images; clear, clean design with reference to media profession.

In addressing the need of users to be independent of time, place, institution and support systems, this resource was developed in line with Taylor's 'computer as tool' use of computer technology in learning contexts (1980). Accordingly, the tone of language is conversational – as if a teacher is speaking to the user. Successful independent learning is also assured by following several characteristics listed by Alessi and Trollip (2001): introductions (to tutorial and to each section) inform users about purpose, what to expect, directions to other parts of the resource (such as self-tests, learning contracts and resources) and simultaneously model appropriate introductions to training; locus of control is assured whereby the user decides when to move through the learning sections and pages, they can leave and return to the same place in the tutorial, can elect to print any or all pages, print out learning contracts and journal pages, can access the resources at any stage; clear transitions and consistent layout and presentation; and sufficient, succinct instructional text.

Finally, the resource addresses issues of cognitive working load which can affect learner interactions with elearning and their ability to learn. Derived from Ally (2004). The resource

- places important information at the centre of the screen – in this tutorial, students move from narrow left-hand navigation (the choices to make and navigation source) to a wide information 'page' on the right and centre;
- highlights critical information and organises text clearly – new tutorial pages are presented for each new learning point, headings are used to organise sections of learning within the page and highlight the content, dot points help to organise text, as do charts, and short, simple sentences are used for ease of online reading and potential non-English speaking background users;
- expresses the purpose of each component – through the use of an introduction for each section;
- chunks or minimises text on screen – the organisation of content into separate pages of similar length, attending to a separate component of content assists in this notion as does the use of headings to clearly identify text purpose, designing white space to reduce on-screen crowding of text, and using dot points, tables, and other diagrammatic means of chunking or minimising text.

Thus, instructional design considerations address how the needs articulated in a design brief, or instructional intent, are best met through informed choices about technological characteristics to apply. Good instructional design brings decisions of teaching and learning together with affordances of technology within the contextual constraints. Accordingly, this resource adopted a simple, clean presentation with few fancy interactive elements to take into account not only users' time and financial constraints but also unknown potential constraints with quality of computer technology and access to Internet and broadband available to the user-learners. These instructional design decisions were determined in conjunction with the content development considerations in an on-going design cycle. This paper now reflects on the content design considerations applied during the development of the *My Media Trainer* resource.

CONTENT DESIGN APPROACH

The underlying pedagogical theme of *My Media Trainer* is that teaching adults is fundamentally different than teaching children. To reinforce this theme, the content of the resource is founded on the early model of adult education developed by Knowles where he described five defining characteristics of the adult learner (1970):

- **Self-concept** - As a person matures his self concept moves from one of being a dependent toward being self-directed;
- **Experience** - As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes a resource for learning;
- **Readiness to learn** - As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the tasks of his various roles;
- **Orientation to learning** - As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediate application and accordingly, his orientation toward learning shifts from subject-centred to problem-centred;
- **Motivation to learn** - As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal rather than externally driven (Knowles et al, 1984).

My Media Trainer was designed to cater to the adult learner - to produce an effective adult learning tool, and very importantly, to give a tangible model of the appropriate training approach. The resource develops a practical knowledge of the characteristics of adult learners in the section 'Setting the Climate for Learning'. In the segment 'The Adult Learner and the Learner-centred Approach', there is an interactive exercise, which details the characteristics of adult learners and challenges users to think about and key in the implications of each characteristic for training adults. Once the user has keyed in their thoughts, the CD-ROM provides access to additional suggested ideas. Holistically, the CD-ROM is designed to model the team's adopted approach to adult learning. Thus, throughout the CD-ROM, the user experiences approaches and techniques strongly based on the learning principles listed above, learning the key concepts through experiencing the self-guided learning program.

- Participants are encouraged to work at their own pace. Self-tests are provided to allow users to assess their own learning (*self concept*).
- Exercises are interactive and provide the learner with opportunities to contribute their own knowledge. Rather than didactic, this means learning is more akin to self-discovery (*experience*).
- The CD-ROM is premised on the user having a real purpose for developing training skills; for professionals who have a real and immediate need – a workplace requirement to train others and thus it is a step-by-step train the trainer guide (*readiness to learn*).
- Users are able to immediately apply their learning - the 'Training Resources' section contains media competency sets, materials, readings and tools that can be used in running a media training course. These resources are available throughout the learners' time spent completing the materials and each page is printable to enable users to keep as a record or to use in their training of others (immediacy in *orientation to learning*).
- Reinforcing the internally-driven motivation of adults, the CD-ROM also contains a tool called 'My Learning Diary' in which users can plan their goals, their learning activities, self-assessment and self-reward (*motivation to learn*).

Figure 2: My Media Trainer approach and the adult learner.

Characteristics of adult learners	***My Media Trainer* approach**
Self-concept – self-directed	Self-paced, self-instructional tool, self-tests.
Experience – a resource for learning	Interactive exercises that stimulate thought.
Readiness – learning tasks relating to a role	Designed to help media professionals

	develop specific trainer competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes).
Orientation to learning – immediate application	Training Resources section contains training materials, tools, readings.
Motivation - internal	My Learning Diary for planning learning.

Extending Knowles model of the adult learner presented above, he later proposed a seven-step process for training adults (Knowles, 1980). This process was applied in the design of the content of this training package:

1. set a cooperative learning climate
2. create mechanisms for mutual planning
3. arrange for a diagnosis of learner needs and interests
4. enable the formulation of learning objectives based on the diagnosed needs and interests
5. design sequential activities for achieving the objectives
6. execute the design by selecting methods, materials, and resources
7. evaluate the quality of the learning experience while re-diagnosing needs for further learning.

The content segments of *My Media Trainer* were specifically organised to reflect these seven steps:

1. Setting the climate for learning
2. My learning with subsections My self-assessment tool and My learning contract
3. Identify learning needs
4. Develop a media training course, specifically the segment Write aims and objectives
5. Design a media training module, specifically the segments
    a. Prepare a lesson plan
    b. Training techniques
    c. Apply effective learning methods
6. Evaluate your course

Each section on the CD-ROM provides information and interactive exercises, as well as a complementary self-tests and learning resources. In addition to providing appropriate content, the recourse is also designed to model each step in the adult learning process with a particular focus on the adult learners' characteristics of independent, internally motivated learners. Examples of this are (see also Figure 3):

1. The CD-ROM is at its core self-instructional, self-paced, interactive, relevant to a specific role and provides for self-motivation, self-direction and self-testing.
2. A planning mechanism is provided in My Learning where, on the basis of a self-analysis, users are invited to set goals and plan their learning via My Learning Diary and My Learning Contract.
3. In diagnosing their own learning needs, learners reflect on and make use of a full set of Media Trainer Competencies and a Self-Assessment Tool.
4. Each section contains a set of learning objectives written in behavioural terms describing desired learning outcomes thereby providing examples of how learning objective are defined.
5. Each section has been uniquely designed to provide a series of segments containing sequences of activities for achieving desired learning outcomes.
6. Learning techniques appropriate to each topic are provided in each section and resources made available in the Training Resources section.
7. Self-tests at the end of each section give users the opportunity to test their new knowledge and My Learning Diary allows users to gauge the extent to which they have achieved their learning goals.

Figure 3: My Media Trainer and adult learning.

Adult training process	***My Media Trainer* design**
Create mechanisms for mutual planning	Learning contract, learning diary.
Arrange for a diagnosis of learner needs and interests	Media trainer competencies, self-assessment tool.
Enable the formulation of learning objectives based on the diagnosed needs and interests	Behavioural learning objectives define desired outcomes for each section.
Design sequential activities for achieving the objectives	Sections contain topic segments with relevant activities.
Execute the design by selecting methods, materials and resources	Varying learning techniques used and resources provided.
Evaluate the quality of the learning experience while re-diagnosing needs for further learning	Self-tests, learning diary.

Thus, designing the content for this resource was based on sound theoretical principles and involved much more than simply determining the needs of varied media professionals. More significantly, it was designed to develop basic trainer pedagogical knowledge from planning through implementation to evaluation. Emphasis was also placed on demonstrating, or giving examples of, quality adult training practices to users. As a result, trainers are both told about training, and to the extent of an independent training resource, modelled training practices. It is the belief of the authors that an integrated approach to pedagogical and resource design is essential to an effective tool applicable for effective learning by the target learning group. Knowing whether and how this approach is effective, both informs our future iterations of this particular resource, as well as any future resource development. With this in mind, the paper now turns to the distribution and evaluation feedback of this resource.

DISTRIBUTION AND FEEDBACK

A CD-ROM version of *My Media Trainer* was produced in 25 copies for initial trials and product evaluation. Soon after, a further 150 copies were printed. A copy of the CD-ROM was also placed on the web-site of the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland (www.uq.edu.au/sjc). The web-site materials rapidly elicited comments and evaluations from several sources, including China and the Republic of Korea, while CD-ROM versions despatched to selected clientele also became the source of useful feedback. By late 2007, *My Media Trainer* was also available on UNESCO's Open Training Platform (http://opentraining.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/page.cgi?d=1). Below are some examples of the positive responses to the CD-ROM, demonstrating its relevance and usefulness to intended user groups:

- After evaluating and using a CD-ROM version, the International Journalism Department at the Kazakh State University in Almaty, Kazakhstan requested that they be given permission to translate *My Media Trainer* into the Russian language.
- In Shanghai, China, an Australian TAFE (Technical and Further Education) teacher providing training for Chinese trainers glowingly noted that "…this product will really help me to put courses together in Shanghai. It's like an expert system, really - SO useful in my line of work…" (Finamore, 2008)
- In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Secretary-General of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU), an organization of 170 members in 53 countries trialled *My Media Trainer* and noted "I spent about two hours going through it last night and almost feel like a qualified trainer now!" (Astley, 2008) He went on to write that "It is an excellent product and we would be happy to publicise its availability through the ABU web-site." (*ibid*)

- In December, 2007 UNESCO highlighted *My Media Trainer* through presentations and workshops of the product at the Third Global Knowledge Conference (GK3) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In 2008, a further two thousand copies of the CD-ROM version were printed in Brisbane and more extensive distribution was undertaken.

CONCLUSION

Long term sustainability is dependent upon empowering people through knowledge sharing and access to education. Journalists, in particular, play an integral role in disseminating information; however a key challenge for educating and up-skilling professionals in this, and other fields of expertise, is the design, development and accessibility of quality educational materials for trainers, particularly in developing countries. The instructional design of this educational resource ensures accessibility, engagement, and ease of use. The content is relevant to training trainers of adult learners and, at the same time, and very importantly, models the appropriate methodologies for facilitating adult learning. The *My Media Trainer* resource supports UNESCO's international role in facilitating development, knowledge sharing, literacy and poverty alleviation through the use of information and communication technologies to support access to quality education and training, especially in developing countries.

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